



The Khālsā in Comparative Perspective



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(Essays in Sikhism and Comparative Religions)

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Preface

Religious traditions from now onwards are to be conceived and lived in a global context. The whole world has grown into a global village. The age of proselytisation and exclusivism in the field of religion is already past. The varied religious traditions are in a situation of inter-religious dialogue. It is not enough for any religious interpretation to be meaningful within the particular religious tradition itself but it should also be meaningful for the whole religious heritage of mankind. In brief, the religious interpretation in future is to be carried out in the context of religious diversity. The genuine recognition of religious diversity not only includes regard for every individual religious tradition but also impresses upon us the necessity of openness to diverse religious traditions.

The collection of papers being presented here is conceived in a genuine ecumenical spirit without being unfair to the rightful claims of the Sikh identity. All these papers are already published in the journals enjoying international reputation. Some of these papers were presented in the International conferences in India and abroad. Majority of the papers concern the study of basic Sikh themes. Papers relating to other traditions have the distinction of being approved by the scholars and laymen belonging to those traditions. The paper on the "Issues in the Study of Faith" was presented to Professor Wilfred Cantwell Smith himself.

The author wants to express his sincere thanks and gratitude to the Center for the Study of World Religions (Harvard), the International Religious Foundation (New York), the Coventry University (U.K.) and the Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies (Patiala), for these institutions were main inspiration and instrumental behind the preparation of these papers.

These papers are being issued in the book form with the hope that they will not only strengthen our resolve to work further in this direction but also awaken the author to many of their limitations and inadequacies.

Lastly, sincere thanks are due to S. Gursagar Singh ji of the Singh Brothers for bringing out these papers in the book form and for their ungrudging editorial labours to create uniformity in the presentation.

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The *Khālsā* in Comparative Perspective

In the tercentenary year of the *khālsā* a reappraisal of the understanding of the nature of *khālsā* seems to be most appropriate. The *khālsā*, as we are well aware by now, is the religious fellowship or the sacred community of the Sikhs as it came to be so designated after the initiation ceremony by the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh on the Baisakhi Day of 1699 at Anandpur Sahib (now in Ropar District of Punjab).

Ganda Singh explains, "the term *khālsā* is derived from the Arabic *khālis* (literally pure, unsullied) and Perso-Arabic *khālisāh* (literally pure, office of revenue department; lands directly under government management), is used collectively for community of the baptised Sikhs. The term *khālisāh* was used during the Muslim rule in India for crown lands administered directly by the king without the mediation of *Jāgirdārs* or *mansabdārs*."¹

Ganda Singh, elaborating the implications of the term in the context of the Sikh community says, "the term *khālsā*, however acquired a specific connotation after Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) introduced, on March 30, 1699, the new form of initiatory rite *khaṇḍe dī pāhul* (rites by *khaṇḍā* or double-edged sword). Sikhs so initiated on that Baisakhi day were collectively designated as *khālsā*—*khālsā* who belonged to *Vāhegurū*, the Supreme Lord.

The phrase *Vāhegurū Jī kā khālsā* became part of the Sikh Salutation : *Vāhegurū jī kā khālsā Vāhegurū jī kī Fateh* (Hail the *khālsā* who belongs to the Lord God ? Hail the Lord God whom belongs the victory).² The *khālsā* in the above sense is God's own

1. Ganda Singh, 'Khālsā' *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, Vol. II (Edited by Harbans Singh) Patiala : Patiala University, 1996, p. 473; J.D. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs* (New Delhi; S. Chand & Company Ltd., 1981), p. 63 (footnote 2)
2. Ganda Singh, 'Khālsā' *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, Vol. II, pp. 473-474.

or chosen people. The community instituted by the founder of the faith, Guru Nanak was called *Sangat* (congregation, assembly) or *Panth*. The term *panth* is derived from the Sanskrit *Patha*, *Pathin* or *Pantham* means literally a way, passage or path and figuratively, a way of life, religious creed or cult. In the Sikh terminology, the word *Panth* stands for the Sikh faith as well as for the Sikh people as a whole.³ Even after the initiation of the *khālsā* the term *panth* was not altogether dropped and the community is often referred to as the *khālsā panth*.

The institution of the *khālsā* has been viewed by both the Sikh and non-Sikh interpreters from different perspectives. Majority of the Western Interpreters have viewed the creation of the *khālsā* by Guru Gobind Singh as deviation from the peace loving spiritual path laid down by Guru Nanak Dev. Wilson writes, "The succession of the son of Tegh Bahadur—Guru Gobind constitutes the most important era in the political progress of the Sikhs. He, infact, changed the whole character of the community and converted the Sikhs of Nanak, the disciple of the religion of spirituality and benevolence, and professors of a faith of peace and goodwill into an armed confederacy a military republic".⁴ A galaxy of the 'illustrious' Hindu scholars have not lagged behind in terming the creation of *khālsā* by Guru Gobind Singh as a great fall from the lofty spirituality propounded by Guru Nanak, M.K. Gandhi in his *Young India* termed Guru Gobind Singh as "misguided patriot". R.N. Tagore in one of his articles labelled the *khālsā* as a "cantonment of mere soldiers." J.N. Sarkar follows Tagore in his article on the Sikhs published in April issue of the *Modern Review*, Calcutta, 1916. Not only he follows Tagore but also quotes him with some pride.⁵ In the electronic media and newspapers Guru Gobind Singh is often compared with Shivaji and Rana Partap as the

3. Fauja Singh, 'Panth', *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, Vol. III (Edited by Harbans Singh) (Patiala : Punjabi University), 1997, p. 288

4. H.H. Wilson, 'Civil and Religious Institutions of the Sikhs' *Western Images of the Sikh Religion, A Source Book*, (Edited by Darshan Singh) (New Delhi : National Book Organization) 1999, p. 91.

5. For a comprehensive discussion of their views from the point of view of faith see *Puran Singh Studies*, Vol. 3, Nos. 1-2, January-April 1981 (Patiala : Punjabi University). pp. 23-39.

protector of sovereignty and unity of the country. In the assessment of Puran Singh, "What was Shivaji but an ordinary soldier like Guru Gobind Singh minus his spirituality. Shivaji may be great politically but it is fetish worship if we raise him in the eyes of the nation as a spiritual genius."⁶ Majority of the scholars conversant with the modern Western scientific method of analysis have seen the creation of the *khālsā* as a strategic move on the part of Guru Gobind Singh to respond to the growing challenge of the repressive regime of the Moghals. The Marxist Sikh Scholars such as Kishan Singh,⁷ have perceived the creation of *khālsā* as inauguration of the prototype of proletariat movement among the Sikhs. A few earlier Sikh chroniclers⁸ have represented the creation of *khālsā* as a step to purge the Sikh religious organization (*Sangat*) from the corrupt and rapacious practices of the Masands (intermediaries between the *sangat* and the Guru). One prominent common feature of all these interpretations is their being reductionist in nature. No doubt, the reform, reformulation, purgation and fight against the tyrants are inseparable part of the *khālsā* organization but its basic concern remains the establishment of the kingdom of God, Satiyuga, Ram Rajya, etc. at the initiative of God Himself. The above interpreters coming from diverse fields have attempted to measure the immeasurable vision of the Guru in the light of their own limited vision and understanding.

If the holy verses of *Gurbānī*, the sacred utterances of Guru Gobind Singh, the unbroken oral tradition of the faithful and the account of the earlier Sikh sources are to be relied on there is only one perspective to examine and evaluate the nature of *khālsā panth* i.e. the context of the sacred communities emerged among the world religions such as the Church, Umma, Sangha, *Varṇāshrama* system, etc. In the portrayal of the *Panth* and the *Khālsā* organization, the Umma, the *Varṇāshrama* system and other Divinely ordained human organizations have been repeatedly mentioned by the Guru and the traditional Sikh interpreters as the forerunners of the *Sangat*, *panth* and the *khālsā*. The emergence of the *panth* and *khālsā* is related to

6. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

7. Kishan Singh, *Sikh Lehar* (Pbi.) (Delhi : Arsee Publishers), 1978.

8. Sainapati, *Sri Guru Sobha*; Kuir Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi Das*, etc.

the decline of the above institutions in performing their function in an impartial and just way.

If the *khālsā* is to be viewed in the context of religious communities developed among the world religions, brief elucidation of the nature of religious communities seems to be in order. Dutch phenomenologist of religion, G. Van Der Leeuw in his attempt to describe the nature of Church has offered the following comprehensive definition: "The church is therefore visible-invisible at once humanly organized and mystically animated, spiritual and cosmic."⁹ The above definition of the Church can be extended to the majority of religious communities of the world. The holy, sacred communities have dual character; they are at once divinely inspired and humanly organized. The holy communities are grounded in the religious experience of their founders. "Religious experience," says Kitagawa, "is one kind of human experience. However it is qualitatively different from other human experiences in the sense that it is decisive. It often causes a new life a devaluation of all that preceded. Religious man is not satisfied with life as it is given; he seeks the fulfillment of life at the ultimate limit of the life."¹⁰ At another place quoting the well known theory of two types of relationships offered by Martin Buber, Kitagawa explains the nature of religious experience in relation to other human experiences. He states, "There is a qualitative difference between religious experience and other kinds of human experience, however which can be characterized in terms of Martin Buber's famous theory of two kinds of relationship: a "I- It relationship and an "I-Thou relationship." "...we might say that in religion man experiences an intensive "I-Thou relationship", using the term religion in the broadest sense. Religious man does not live in a different world: he views the same world from a different perspective—the perspective of an "I-Thou relationship."¹¹ In an attempt to relate the above mentioned character of the religious experience to the existence of religious fellowship, he explains,

9. G. Van Der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, Vol. I (Transl. by J.E. Turner) (Gloucester; Peter Smith, 1967), p. 266.

10. Joseph M. Kitagawa, *Religions of the East* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press), pp. 28-29.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

“Religious fellowship does not exist apart from human fellowship, because it is conditioned and colored by other kinds of human experience and fellowship. The relationship between religious and other human fellowship is intricate and complex. On the one hand, religion tends to intensify or even transform human fellowships. On the other hand, religion often creates its own “holy community” in the midst of and yet apart from, other human communities. In some cases religion sanctifies one form of human community such as the family (as in the case of Confucianism) or tribe.”¹²

In the modern desacralized world the secular societies tend to separate their fellowship from the Holy communities. However, for the primitive or archaic man there was only one community i.e. the sacred community and his relation to this community was characterized by the “I-thou relationship.” Elaborating the point further Kitagawa says, “Archaic man considered the earthly society a counterpart of heavenly society.” Following the interpretation of Mircea Eliade (*Cosmos and History*) Kitagawa relates that the earthly societies were replicas of the heavenly city, and the human community was the holy community in the sense that it was the extension of the celestial community.”¹³ Concerning the essential nature of the sacred community, Kitagawa arrives at the following conclusion: “the holy community participates in two societies, spiritual and empirical. It also recognises two histories—history of salvation and empirical history.”¹⁴ The eschatological goals always form inseparable part of the religious fellowships. The religious experience imports a depth dimension to the religious communities which is not found in any other secular or natural groups. Joachim Wach maintains in this context that, “As far as relationship of members of a religious group to each other is concerned, we may well expect to find a dimension of depth to which a non-religious association will not always aspire. In most primitive religions, a strong tie binds the members of a tribal cult together, and on the lever of the great religions, spiritual brotherhood surpasses physical ties between brothers. A “father or mother in God”, a “brother or

12. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

sister in God", may be closer to us than our physical parents and relatives. There is no stronger tie possible between human beings than their being related to each other in God."¹⁵

One distinguishing feature of the religious community is its insistence on the requirement of initiatory rites for the novices or new entrants seeking membership of the community. Defining initiation Mircea Eliade maintains, "the term initiation in most general sense denotes a body of rites and oral teachings whose purpose is to produce a radical modification of the religious and social status of the person to be initiated. In philosophical terms, initiation is equivalent to an ontological mutation of the existential condition. The novice emerges from this ordeal a totally different being : he has become "another."¹⁶ According to Mircea Eliade the initiatory rites always follow a standard pattern that involves "seclusion, initiatory tests and tortures, "death" and "resurrection," "bestowal or imposition of a new name, revelation of a secret doctrine, learning of a new language." Initiatory "death" in the views of Eliade, "signifies both the end of the "natural" acultural man and the passage to a new mode of existence, that of a being "born to the spirit, that is, one who does not live exclusively in an immediate reality. Thus the initiatory "death" and "resurrection" represents a religious process through which the initiate becomes "another," patterned on the model revealed by gods or mythical ancestors."¹⁷

Alongwith these few similarities in the general nature of the religious fellowships and their methods of initiation there are innumerable variations among them that derive mostly from the respective world-views of their preceptors the nature of authority, inner differentiation, attitude towards the world and a host of other ethnic, geographical, cultural factors.

As we attempt to evaluate the nature of *khālsā panth* in the light of above observations of the celebrated authorities in the field of

15. Joachim Wach, *The Comparative Study of Religions* (Edited by J.M. Kitagawa) (New York : Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 125.

16. Mircea Eliade, 'Initiation', *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, Vol. 7 (Edited by Mircea Eliade) New York : Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987) p. 225.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 225-226.

History of Religions it does not leave an iota of doubt about the essential nature of *khālsā panth*. The *khālsā panth* not only derives its existence from the vision and experience of the founder as is the case with Christianity and Buddhism but was actually instituted by the Guru himself on the Baisakhi day of 1699. The creation of *khālsā panth* was not the result of any strategic move on the part of Guru Gobind Singh to face the repressive policy of the Mughal regime but a logical culmination of the *sangat* or *panth* founded by Guru Nanak Dev. The *khālsā* was the result of a well worked out gradual process (*Sahiye Rachio khālsā*) based on the knowledge dawned by the inspiration and order of the Eternal Guru.¹⁸ If the arming of the disciples created the *khālsā* then Guru Arjan had already asked his son Guru Hargobind to "sit fully armed on his throne, and maintain army to the best of his ability."¹⁹ If the fighting of the battles makes the *khālsā*, the Sikhs of Guru Hargobind has already taken part in the battles and emerged victorious. If the call of the Guru to the Sikhs to offer their head makes *khālsā* Guru Nanak Dev had already created *khālsā* :

Shouldst thou seek to engage
In the game of love,
Step into my street with thy head
Placed on thy palm :
While on this stepping
Ungrudgingly sacrifice your head.²⁰

The fourth Guru, Guru Ram Dass had expressed :

To the holy preceptor shall I sacrifice my head,
should the thrice-holy preceptor thus
be pleased to accept this offering.
Lord Bestower, show grace that
Nanak in your embrace be held.²¹

Guru Arjan lays down the condition for entering into the path of discipleship as follows :

18. Bhai Gurdas II, Var 41, Pauri 16.

19. M.A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. 3 (New Delhi : S. Chand and Company Ltd., 1978), p. 99.

20. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Slok M.1, p. 1412 (Transl. by G.S. Talib, Vol. 4, p. 2821)

21. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Tukhari, Chhant, M. 4, p. 114 (Transl. by G.S. Talib, Vol. 4, p. 2267).

Accept first death as inevitable, and attachment to life discard;
Turn dust of feet of all thereafter to us come.²²

If we take into consideration the evidences of the fifth to twenty second stanzas of the first *Var* of Bhai Gurdas,²³ the sixth chapter of the Bachittar Natak²⁴, and innumerable verses of *Gurbānī*, it becomes absolutely clear that the primary object of the lives of the Gurus was to re-establish the true *dharma* and to reinvigorate and reenergize the forces of goodness and righteousness. The traditional religions had estranged from the Path of truth and God and corruption and degeneration had overtaken the religious institutions and practices of the people and the prevailing situation in words of Guru Nanak was :

This is the dark night of evil;
The moon of truth is nowhere visible, nor risen.²⁵

Guru Nanak was invested with the mission by God to dispel darkness and spread the light of Truth :

I, an idle bard by Thee a task am assigned
In primal time was I commanded night and day to laud Thee.
The bard by the Master to the Eternal Mansion was summoned.
And with the robe of holy *Divine* laudation and praise honoured.
On the holy Name ambrosial was he feasted.
As by master's guidance on this he has feasted has felt blessed.
Saith Nanak : By laudation of holy Eternal,
Is the Supreme Being, all perfection attained.²⁶

In the words of Satta and Balwand Guru Nanak by establishing the *panth* has started a royal dynasty :

Nanak started the royal dynasty within the firm citadel and foundation of truth.²⁷

22. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Maru, Var, Slok M. 5, p. 1102 (Translation by G.S. Talib, Vol. 3, p. 2240)

23. *Varan Bhai Gurdas* (Amritsar : Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, 1981), pp. 3-11

24. *Shabdarth Dasam Granth Sahib* (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1973) Vol. I, pp. 71-75.

25. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Majh, Slok M.1, p.145. (Transl. G.S. Talib, Vol. I, p. 229).

26. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Var Majh, M.1, Pauri 27, p. 150 (Transl. G.S. Talib, Vol. I, p. 313).

27. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Ramkali Var, Satta and Balwand, Pauri I, p.966 (Transl. by G.S. Talib, Vol. 3, p. 1982).

Bhai Gurdas has repeatedly maintained that Guru Nanak has started a new *panth* by the command of Almighty :

By means of divine word (*Sabad*) he overcame
the assembly (of) Siddhas distinguishing
his way (*panth*) from theirs.²⁸

The same theme is endlessly repeated by Bhai Gurdas :

He caused his writ to run throughout the
world and (so) inaugurated his holy Panth.²⁹

On the theme of the establishment of *Sangat, Panth, Dharma*, by Guru Nanak Dev the Tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh himself writes in the Bachittar Natak thus :

In the family of those Bedis was born the Great Guru Nanak.
He bestowed peace on all Sikhs and protected them in all places.
He established this (Sikh) dharma in the Kali (age) and showed the
way to all good people.
Those who came unto his path, their sins and worries were all taken
away by the Lord.
Pain and hunger never worried them.
They were never entangled by the snares of death.³⁰

From the above cited passages it is quite evident that the *panth/sangat* was established by Guru Nanak. Later on the same *sangat* or *panth* was reconfirmed as the *khālsā*. Some of the *sangats* under the direct control of the Guru were designated as *khālsā* as is evident from the *Hukamnāmā* of Guru Hargobind the Sixth Sikh Guru :

"the *sangat* of the east is Guru's *khālsā*."³¹

On March 12, 1699 just 19 days before the creation of the *khālsā* Guru Gobind Singh in his *Hukamnāmā* addressed to the *sangat* of the Machhiwara writes :...the *sangati* is my *khālsā*.³²

Bhai Gurdas II in his *var* says while creating the *khālsā* Guru

28. Bhai Gurdas, *Varan*, Var 1, Pauri 31 (Transl. by W.H. McLeod), *Source on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak*, (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1969) p. 37.

29. Bhai Gurdas, *Varan*, Var 1, Pauri 45 (Transl. by W.H. McLeod, *Ibid.*, p. 43)

30. *Shabdarth Dasam Granth Sahib*, Bachittar Natak, Chapter 5, Stanzas 4-6, p. 70 (Transl. by Ganda Singh, *Source on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak* (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1969), p. 30.

31. *Hukamname* (Edited by Ganda Singh) (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1967), p. 67.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 153

Gobind Singh reconverted the *sangat* into *khālsā* whereby putting the evil doers to trouble.³³

Sainapati the author of *Sri Guru Sobha* also claims that the Tenth Guru reconfirmed that *sangat* as *khālsā* :

"Guru Gobind Singh became pleased and *sangat* came to be blessed. Then he manifested the *khālsā* thereby removing all the bondages."³⁴

Bhai Sukha Singh also expresses similar views about the creation of the *khālsā* :

Wherever the beloved *sangat* of the Guru was. All of them came to be (confirmed as) *khālsā*.³⁵

In spite of all the efforts of the trained minds to unravel by mystery of the creation of *khālsā*, over the period of centuries, it still remains to be the greatest mystery. There are as many views on the creation of *khālsā* as there are accounts devoted to describe it. However, the description preserved in the Bachittar Natak,³⁶ has been endlessly repeated by all the interpreters. It is as clear and yet as mysterious as any great revealed literature could be. The Guru is reported to have attained oneness with God through meditative penances on him. God blessed Guru Gobind Singh as His son and sent him to the earth by investing him with the mission of establishing and propagating the Panth. In the words of Kapur Singh, "he unambiguously states that he, in essence, is an archetypal Form in the Mind of God, conceived by God and transformed by Him into Guru Gobind Singh, "to found the order of the *khālsā*, to aid the cause of good and to thwart evil."³⁷ All the earlier Sikh interpreters are unanimous on this view that Guru Gobind Singh created the *khālsā* at the instance of explicit Divine order. *Khālsā* emerged out of the delight of the Primal Purakh—Eternal God. The *khālsā* is the ordained army of God and *khālsā* belongs to Timeless

33. Bhai Gurdas II, Var 41, Pauri I, *Varan Bhai Gurdas* (Amritsar : Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, 1981), p. 436.

34. Sainapati, *Sri Gur Sobha* (Edited by Ganda Singh) (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1980), Chapter 5, p. 20.

35. Sukha Singh, *Gurbilas, Patshahi 10* (Patiala : Language Department, Punjab, 1989), p. 181.

36. *Shabdarth Dasam Granth Sahib*, Vol. I, Chapter 6, pp. 71-75.

37. Kapur Singh, *Parasara-prasna* (Amritsar : Guru Nanak Dev University, 1989) p. 125.

one.³⁸ The *khālsā* is the visible body of the Guru and the Guru always manifests in the body of *khālsā*.³⁹ The purpose of the *khālsā* is the same as that of Guru's coming down on earth that is to promote forces of Good and to destroy the evil root and branch.⁴⁰ The *khālsā* is the Guru of Guru Gobind Singh and the guruship is bestowed on *Guru Granth Sahib* and the *khālsā*.⁴¹ Before the departure from this mortal world the Guru promised his Sikhs that he would be present among them wherever the five Sikhs assemble. M.A. Macauliffe has recorded the last words of the Guru to the Sikhs as follows :

"I have entrusted you to the Immortal God. Ever remain under His protection, and trust to none besides. Whenever there are five Sikhs assembled who abide by Guru's teachings, know that I am in the midst of them. He who serveth them shall obtain the reward thereof the fulfillment of all his heart's desires. Read the history of your Gurus from the time of Guru Nanak. Henceforth the Guru shall be the *khālsā* and the *khālsā* the Guru."⁴²

The dramatic event of the choice of the five beloved ones (Panj Piare) by Guru Gobind Singh on the Baisakhi day 1699 at Anandpur Sahib is too well known to be taken up here for detailed description. It all happened before the Sangat in open enclave on the occasion of the festival day. Five times the Guru asked for the head of any devoted Sikh and every time one after another arose with folded hands. They were taken in a nearby tent turn by turn. Every time the congregation assembled for the festivities heard a hushing sound of a thud within the tent and saw the Guru reappearing with the blood-drenched sword in hand. After the fifth one was taken in the

38. Bhai Gurdas II, Var 41, Pauri 16; Giani Gian Singh, *Sri Guru Panth Parkash* (Ed. Kirpal Singh) Amritsar : Manmohan Singh Brar, 1974), Vol. 4, p.1719; *Sri Sarabloh Granth*, p. 668; The Sikh Salutation.

39. *Sri Sarabloh Granth*, Sainapati, *Sri Gur Sobha*, 42,807, pp. 128-29; *Prem Sumarg Granth* (Darshan Guru kā Prāpat hovegā).

40. Sainapati, *Sri Gur Sobha*, Chapter 5, p. 21 (*Asur Sangarbe ko...*); Bhai Gurdas II, Var 41, Pauri 16.

41. Bhai Gurdas II, Var 41; Sainapati, *Sri Gur Sobha*, p. 129; Santokh Singh, *Sri Gur Partap Suraj Granth*, Ruti 6, Chapter 41.

42. M.A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. 5 (New Delhi; S. Chand & Company Ltd., 1978). p. 244.

tent, there was a gap of some dreadful moments of silence in the congregation. A sigh of relief was only restored in the congregation when they saw the Guru coming out of the tent with the five beloved ones donned in new dresses of the same colour. The Guru announced in the congregation that they are his five beloved ones. Then he prepared *Khande*, *Bāte dā Amrit* (the baptism of double-edged sword and steel vessel) and administered to the five beloved ones. The method of preparing the *Amrit* and its administration is too well known to be repeated here. After the Guru baptised the first five Sikhs he changed their names by affixing Singh, meaning lion with their earlier names. They were given a new salutation : *Vāhegurū jī kā khālsā Vāhegurū jī kī Fateh* (the *khālsā* belongs to Almighty God and to God belongs the victory !).

They were taught to recite the creedal formula *mūlmantra* and selected holy compositions of the Gurus at the set hours of the day. "They were told that their rebirth into this brotherhood meant the annihilation of their family ties (*kulnās*) of the occupations which had formerly determined their place in society (*Kritnās*) of their earlier beliefs and creeds and of ritual they observed. Their worship was to be addressed to none but *Akāl*, the Timeless One. They were ever to keep the five emblems of the *khālsā-kesh* or long hair and beard, *Kanghā* comb tucked into the *Kesh* to keep it tidy in contrast to the recluses who kept it matted in token of their having renounced the world; *Karā* a steel bracelet to be worn round the wrist of the right hand, *Kachhā*, short breeches; and *Kirpān* a sword. In the *rehit* or code of conduct promulgated for the Sikhs on that day were the four prohibitions i.e. the cutting or trimming of hair, fornication or adultery, *halāl* meat or flesh of animal slaughtered with the Muslim ritual, and tobacco."⁴³ According to the Sikh code of conduct (*Sikh Rehit Maryādā*) prepared by the Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Amritsar the Sikhs after baptism are told : "From now on your existence as ordinary individuals has ceased, and you are members of the *khālsā* brotherhood, your religious father is Guru Gobind Singh (the tenth and the last Guru, founder of the *khālsā* brotherhood) and Sahib Kaur your mother. Your spiritual

43. Taran Singh, 'Pahul' *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism* Vol. III. (Edited by Harbans Singh) (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1997), p. 264.

birthplace is Kesgarh Sahib (birthplace of the *khālsā*) and your home Anandpur Sahib (the place where Guru Gobind Singh inaugurated the *khālsā*). Your common spiritual parentage makes you all brothers and you should all forsake your previous name (surname) and previous local and religious loyalties. You are to pray to God and God alone, through the scriptures and teachings of the Ten Gurus."⁴⁴ It is pertinent to mention here that no distinction is made in Sikh religion in the case of administering *Amrit* to women. However, it is the term 'Kaur' meaning 'princess' that is affixed with their names. From now onwards the earlier Sikh initiation ceremony came to be discontinued and the Sikh institution of the Masands was disbanded.

Having administered *Amrit* to the five beloved ones Guru Gobind Singh presented himself before them for being baptised in the same manner. His wish was granted and his name was also changed from Gobind Rai to Gobind Singh. The *khālsā* became the Guru of Guru Gobind Singh. The expression "hail hail Guru Gobind Singh himself Guru (himself) disciple"⁴⁵ derives its inspiration from this moment. In the traditional Sikh literature the trials of the five beloved ones by Guru Gobind Singh is often compared to the ordeal of Guru Angad Dev by Guru Nanak Dev. At that time, only one Bhai Lehna emerged victorious and he was named as Angad, (Guru's own body) and he was installed the second Sikh Guru. Now five emerged victorious and Guru Gobind Singh installed them Guru for all times to come.

The *khālsā* is not a "cantonment of mere soldiers"⁴⁶ as surmised by R.N. Tagore. The ideal of the *Khālsā* as found promulgated in the hymns of Guru Gobind Singh is as follows :

He whose mind dwells, night and day, on the
Ever-effulgent Light and who gives not a
moment's thought to ought but the One,
Who wears Perfect Love, with Faith, and believes
not even mistakenly in fasting, tombs,

44. *Ibid.*, p. 265-66

45. Bhai Gurdas II, *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, Var 41, the refrain is employed from stanza 1 to 20, pp. 436-445.

46. Puran Singh, 'The Sikh and His New Critics : Our View point' *Puran Singh Studies*, Vol.-3, Nos. 1-2 (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1981), p. 33.

crematoriums, and hermitages,
 Nor in pilgrimages, nor customary charities, nor
 as set code of self-discipline.
 And believes in One alone and not another:
 And when God's Light illumines perfectly his heart
 then is he known a *khālsā*, purest of the pure!⁴⁷

It may be noticed that the *khālsā* initiatory ceremony follows the same paradigmatic model as explained by Mircea Eliade in his most comprehensive article.⁴⁸ The ceremony involves the process of ordeals, death resurrection and new life. The ceremony in the words of Mircea Eliade "reveals to every new generation a world open to the transhuman; a world, one may say, that is transcendental".⁴⁹ The Sikhs have cherished this belief right from the time of the Primal Guru—Guru Nanak Dev :

By taking new birth with the holy Preceptor is
 my straying in transmigration annulled.⁵⁰

From the foregone brief description of the nature of the *khālsā* it can be safely maintained that essentially the *khālsā panth* is a religious fellowship and its primary aim is to promote and aid the forces of Good and to lead mankind on the path of liberation. Alongwith this primary goal the *khālsā* has also been enjoined to engage in the sacred duty of destroying and defeating the forces of Evil. The latter injunction has far reaching religious, social and political implications but this cannot be taken up for elaboration in our present limited venture.

Now we can turn our attention to the question of the place of the *khālsā* among the religious Communities of the world. In this context it is not possible to include the description of the nature of each religious community. However, it seems quite pertinent to refer to the nature of the Buddhist Sangha as an instance. From the following brief account the readers can draw their own conclusion

47. Gopal Singh (Transl.), *Thus Spake the Tenth Master* (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1978), p. 131.

48. Mircea Eliade, 'Initiation', *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, Vol. 7 (New York : Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987).

49. *Idid.*, p. 226.

50. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Ramkali, Siddha Goshti, M. 1, p. 940 (Transl. by G.S. Talib, Vol. III, p. 1926).

concerning the nature of the *khālsā* in relation to the Sangha.

The Buddhist religious community is designated as Sangha. The Sangha forms part of the three Jewels of Buddhism i.e. the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The term Sangha means 'assembly, or multitude' and the term was used in North India at the time of Buddha for assembling, by means of which contemporary tribal republics or confederations managed their affairs. The republican assemblies are brought into connection with the Buddhist community at the beginning of the *Mahāparinibbana Sutta* where the Buddha is represented as saying: "As long as the Vījjians foregather thus often, and frequent the public meetings of their clan so long may they be expected not to decline but to prosper."⁵¹

The Buddhist Sangha was established by Buddha himself when he accepted as his first disciples five men before whom he had preached his first sermon in a part near Varanasi.⁵² The Buddhist Sangha in the wider sense of the word consists of four assemblies (*prāsads*) they are monks (*bhikkhus*), nuns (*bhikkhunis*), male lay followers (*upasikas*). However, in the narrower sense of the word, Sangha is the community of monks and nuns only.⁵³ The *Pratimoksa* a part of *Vinayavibhanga* a text of the *Vinaya Pitaka* consists of the rules of conduct for the monks and nuns.

The members of the Buddhist Sangha were those followers of Buddha who having heard and received the Dharma were prepared to leave behind life of household of family and become wandering almsmen (*bhikkhus*).⁵⁴ To become a disciple of Buddha means to leave parents and relatives, wife and child, home and property and all else as flamingos leave their lakes.⁵⁵ Their own name for the community was Bhikkhu Sangha but by the non-Buddhist Sangha they were all first known as *Sakya-puttiya-samanas* i.e. wanderers (*samanas*) of (him of) the Sakya clan namely Gotama.⁵⁶ In the

51. Trevor Ling, 'Sangha', *A Dictionary of Comparative Religions*, (Edited by S.G.F. Brandon) (London: Weickenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), p. 555.

52. Heinz Bechert, 'Sangha', *The Encyclopaedia of Religions* (Edited by Mircea Eliade), Vol. 13, *op.cit.* p. 36.

53. *Ibid.*,

54. Trevor Ling, 'Sangha', *op.cit.*, p. 555.

55. Joachim Wach, *The Comparative Study of Religions*, p. 128.

56. Trevor Ling, 'Sangha' *A Dictionary of Comparative Religions*, p. 555.

Padhan-sutta from the *Suttanipata* the nature of enlightenment of the Buddha is described as follows : "And in me emancipated arose the knowledge of my emancipation. I realized that destroyed is rebirth, the religious life has been led, done is what was to be done, there is nought (for me) beyond this world... Ignorance was dispelled, knowledge arose, Darkness was dispelled, light arose."⁵⁷ During the life-time Buddha was the highest authority but he declined to appoint a successor, saying that his doctrine alone should guide his followers. When his end was near he exhorted Anand his close confidant to be "reliant on the Law, taking refuge in the Law, not taking refuge in another."⁵⁸ Near the Kusinara Buddha uttered the following last words to his disciples assembled there : "Decay is inherent in all component things. Work out your own salvation with dilligence !"⁵⁹ After his Mahaparinirvana the Buddhist community began to discover a deeper and greater significance in the person of Buddha. Not only was he the discoverer and the teacher of the path, he was "the actuality of the central doctrine, the one who has lived it and reached the goal."⁶⁰ In the context of the relation of the *khālsā* to the Buddhist Sangha the following submission of Niharranjan Ray seems interesting : "was the Buddhist Trinity—the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha—ever at the back of the mind of Guru Gobind Singh when he set up the Sikh Trinity : the God, the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* and the *khālsā* ? May be, it is an idle speculation, and accidental parallel, may be not. But the fact remains that what Guru Gobind Singh did has been to a very large extent responsible for making Sikhism and Sikh society what it is today. He decided on a mission just as did the founder Guru, and both saw to it that their respective missions were carried out to their logical end."⁶¹ Commenting on the nature of the *khālsā panth* in relation to the Buddhist Sangha and the Umma, J.P.S. Uberoi remarks, "The *khālsā* was to be, since its inception, a society for salvation and self-realization, unitarian in religion, vernacularist in culture and

57. Joseph M. Kitagawa, *Religions of the East*, p. 158.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

59. *Ibid.*

60. E.J. Thomas, *History of Buddhist Thought*, 1933, p. 133.

61. Niharranjan Ray, *The Sikh Gurus and the Sikh Society* (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1970). pp. 100-101.

democratic in politics; this was in its nature, its constitution and its modernity of non-daulism. This historical event completed the three-fold identification of the godhead as the guru, the word as the guru and the congregation of the disciples of the guru. Each of them is an identification of the reciprocal embodiment and participation, so producing the archetypal Sikh trinity of *Guru Granth* and Panth (the Way). In India perhaps this recalled equally the Buddhist trinity of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha; and the three-fold equation in Islam of the unity of the godhead (*tauhīd*) the scripture as the word of God (*Kalām-i-Allāh*) and the community of the faithful (*ummat*) but I would not press the point.⁶² Both the above cited authorities have attempted to trace the archetypal similarity between the Sangha, the *khālsā* and also Umma with a note of caution.

We can maintain by way of interim conclusion that the broadest possible synthesis attempted in the creation of the *khālsā* by bringing together the spiritual and temporal, Sanniyyas and Grihstha, worship and action, Raj and Yoga, unity and diversity, Guru Gobind Singh created a model that would light the path of many many future generations to come.

62. J.P.S. Uberoi, *Religion, Civil Society and the State* (Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 74.

Sikhism Among the Religions of the World

To secure Sikhism its legitimate place in the history of the world religions was the pronounced aim of some of the Western writers, who laboured to produce voluminous works for the purpose. Cunningham in his preface to the second edition of the *A History of the Sikhs* states, "The author's principal object in writing this history has not always been understood, and he therefore thinks it right to say that his main endeavour was to give Sikhism its place in the general history of humanity, by showing its connection with the different creeds of India, by exhibiting it as a natural and important result of the Muhammadan conquest and by impressing upon the people of England the great necessity of attending to the mental changes now in progress amongst their subject millions in the East, who are erroneously thought to be sunk in superstitious apathy, or to be held spell-bound in ignorance by a dark and designing priesthood."¹ Macauliffe, expressing great satisfaction at the completion of his *magnum opus*, on the Sikh religion, proclaims to his countrymen, "I bring from the East what is practically an unknown religion. The Sikhs are distinguished through the world as a great military people, but there is little known even to professional scholars regarding their religion. I have often been asked by educated persons in countries which I have visited, and even in India itself, what the Sikh religion was, and whether the Sikhs were Hindus, idolaters or Muhammadans. This ignorance is the result of the difficulty of the Indian dialects in which their sacred writings are contained."² Enumerating the advantages of his work he further states: "An advantage of a literary or historical nature is also

1. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, p. xx (Preface).

2. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. 1, p. v (Preface).

anticipated from this work. It is hoped that it will throw some light on the state of society in the Middle Ages and that it will also be useful for the students of comparative theology." He continues, "Professor Geheimer Hafrath Merx of the Heidelberg University, a very distinguished German savant has recently written to me : "The publication of your work is certainly very desirable. You save in this way materials for the history of religions which, without your help, would probably disappear."³ Concluding his prefatory remarks he again expresses, "The author fondly hopes that this work, which contains an account of the last great religion of the world which remains to be exploited may escape the general fate."⁴

In this context it is pertinent to mention that the work which Macauliffe accomplished could have been accomplished forty years before that, if the Secretary of the State had entrusted the work of the translations of the Sikh scriptures to someone less haughty, less bigoted and less partial scholar than Ernest Trumpp. A huge amount was spent on the project by the British Government in India but Trumpp produced a very biased and distorted account of the Sikh religion and a very faulty and incomplete translation of their sacred writings. It was so negative and damaging that not only the Sikhs but some Western writers also had to reject it. Scholars of the eminence of Max Muller also entertained regret about the work produced by Trumpp : "It is a pity that we possess so little information about the original Sikh reformers. Their sacred book the Granth Sahib exists, nay it has even been translated into English by the late Dr. Trumpp. But it turns out now that Dr. Trumpp was by no means a trustworthy translator...Mr. Macauliffe, who has spent many years among the Sikhs, and has with the help of their priests paid much attention to their Granth Sahib, has given us some most interesting and beautiful specimens of their poetry which form part of their sacred book."⁵

Scholars who have devoted their time and energy to the study of the Sikh religion have strongly recommended further exploration in this area promising various gains of such undertakings. Dorothy

3. *Ibid.*, pp. xxii-xxiii (Preface).

4. *Ibid.*, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv (Preface).

5. As quoted in *Ibid.*, p. xv (Preface).

Field, making a strong case for the study of Sikhism says, "The religion is also one which should appeal to the Occidental mind. It is essentially a practical religion. If judged from the pragmatistical standpoint—which is a favorite point of view in some quarters—it would rank almost first in the world. Of no other religion can it be said that it has made a nation in so short a time. That it should have transformed the outcaste Indian—a notoriously indolent and unstable person—into a fine and loyal warrior, is little short of a miracle. This practical and political side to the question should have a special interest for the West; and above all for English-men, who have so largely reaped the benefits of this grand faith. But apart from political considerations, the religious aspect is one which deserves special attention, Sikhism stands for a great body of religious thought in India, hitherto insufficiently recognised as an inherent factor. Through various nihilistic, pantheistic, or atheistic phases of Hinduism, and despite a vast number of elaborate observances, the ideals of pure monotheism have prevailed, from the time of their foreshadowing in the Vedas, through the works of such men as Rāmānuj and Ramanand to their final epitome in the Sikh Gurus. There they gained new fervour Islamic influence, and, developing warlike ideals as the result of oppression, produced one of the great world religions, the latest to obtain recognition in Europe."⁶

Archer maintains that the study of Sikh history can provide important clues to the understanding of major issues in the discipline of comparative religion. "The five centuries of Sikh history", he states, "provides many lessons in human thought and action which are of more than passing value—often bearing quite directly, for example, upon the major problems of comparative religions."⁷ Archer further elaborates that the recital of the facts of Sikh history "provide materials in illustration of the principles which operate—or at least seem to operate during the interaction of any and all contiguous religions."⁸ Greenlees contends that Sikhism is very much relevant, because of its spiritual merits: "The Sikhs

6. Dorothy Field, *The Religion of the Sikhs*, pp. 34-35.

7. Archer, *The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Ahmadiyyas*, p. v (Preface).

8. *Ibid.*, p. vi (Preface).

should therefore have a great place in the future of their country, as so pure and spiritual a religion as theirs has already a great place among the religions of the world."⁹ Arnold Toynbee evinces special role for the Sikhs and their tradition in the coming days of ever growing interaction of different religious traditions. The tolerant and liberal example of Sikhism, he feels will provide a very positive and creative orientation to the religious traditions of the world. "Mankind's religious future", Toynbee relates, "may be obscure; yet one thing can be foreseen : the living higher religions are going to influence each other more than ever before, in these days of increasing communication between all parts of the world and all branches of the human race. In this coming religious debate the Sikh religion and its scripture the *Adi Granth* will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world. This religion is itself a monument of creative spiritual intercourse between two traditional religions whose relations have otherwise not been happy. This is a good augury."¹⁰ The religion of the Sikhs thus has the potential to play an active and positive role in the coming dialogue or interaction among diverse religious traditions of the world.

The Western tradition of the Sikh studies is now almost two centuries old. Translations of the basic Sikh holy writings and the related materials on the Sikh religion and history are available in English including full length accounts of the Sikh religion and the Sikh history. The Sikhs not only have participated in both the world wars alongwith the English but they are also now found in almost all the Western countries as immigrants. Their religious tradition, far from being extinct, as prophesied by Trumpp and some others, is rather growing more than ever before and the Sikhs are vigorously participating in the religious and secular affairs, not only in their own country India, but all over the world, wherever they have settled. This progress also includes the academic study of their own religious tradition. Yet the Sikh studies have not so far received the proper representation in the study of world religions. Mark Juergensmeyer of the Graduates Theological Union, and the

9. Greenlees, *The Gospel of the Guru Granth Sahib*, p. x.

10. *The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, (trans. by Trilochan Singh and others)
London : George Allen & Unwin, 1965, Foreword, pp. 10-11.

University of California, Berkeley has attempted to make a deep inquiry into the reasons responsible for this neglect and also the benefits that can be accrued by taking it seriously.¹¹

Mark Juergensmeyer begins by stating that Sikhism is an independent religious tradition judging by all the academic norms thereof. "Sikhism", he maintains, "is arguably the most neglected of India's religious traditions, even though it is a formidable and coherent tradition on both the narrow and broad meanings of the term."¹² He goes on to explain it, "Tradition alongwith 'religion', may be used in the Indian context only with qualifications, for neither word is easily translated in any Indian language. The terms frequently used for 'tradition', *parampara* and *sampraday*, refer to a succession of spiritual authority through a line of masters and Gurus. In that sense, then the Sikhs have their own tradition, for if any religious community in India can claim such a succession, it is certainly the community of the Sikhs. Even if one prefers the broad concept of 'cultural tradition' as it is used in Western scholarship, the term is still appropriate, for the Sikhs have a close knit identifiable community with a heritage of symbols, customs, legendary and social character which is distinctly their own. Because of its manageable size and relatively brief history, one would expect that the Sikh tradition would be especially useful for the student of the history of the religions, as a compact and accessible case of the way in which traditions, emerge, become established, and evolve."¹³

Juergensmeyer examines the neglect of Sikhism by taking the categories of the general surveys of world religions, general religious literature and Indian studies one by one. The basic cause of neglect at which he seems to have reached is this, "If Sikhism is accepted as a religion separate from, but similar to, the Hindu tradition, then Sikhism vastly complicates our understanding of the traditions. It forces a discussion of what a tradition is, how it emerges, becomes distinct, and interacts with other traditions. Even more problematic,

11. Mark Juergensmeyer "The Forgotten Tradition : Sikhism in the Study of World Religions", *The Sikh Studies : Comparative Perspective on a Changing Tradition* (ed.), pp. 13-24.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

it throws open the question of whether there is such a thing as a Hindu tradition throughout the continent and throughout the centuries, about which one may write with certainty. The Sikh problem, then becomes the Hindu problem; and rather than facing that, the authors of the textbooks dismiss Sikhism as syncretism or avoid it altogether."¹⁴ He further maintains that the Sikh studies have been ignored in the texts on world religions because it challenges the definition of religious traditions and it has been ignored from the thematic studies because it is too devotional.¹⁵ Juergensmeyer goes on to explain that Sikhism has been ignored in the Indian studies on account of two basic prejudices. The first prejudice, he points out is against regionalism as compared to a unified Indian or the Hindu tradition. Sikhism has been neglected because it is not only relatively modern but almost exclusively Panjabi.¹⁶ If the Sikh studies are taken seriously according to the learned scholar, "The obvious benefit would be a more sophisticated understanding of a rich and interesting religious tradition. But in addition, one might hope for a more complex interpretation of the whole of India's cultural history."¹⁷ Juergensmeyer has raised very pertinent issues regarding the present and future of the Sikh studies and the study of the world religions. Relatively modern origin of Sikhism, problems of the identification and location of the Sikh tradition, paucity of materials on all aspects of Sikhism and the shadow of the Hindu tradition on this small tradition are some of the reasons which have contributed to the neglect of the Sikh studies among the world religions.

But the picture on the whole is not as dismal as presented by the learned scholar. The Sikh religion is increasingly being recognized as having characteristic features of its own, even within its Indian or Hindu context. People recognise this only when their acquaintance with the Sikh tradition becomes more close. An interesting example of it can be seen in the two publications of Nicol Macnicol. In his *Indian Theism* first published in 1915 he discussed

14. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Guru Nanak alongwith Kabir in one of the chapters entitled 'Kabir and Nanak'.¹⁸ But the same author in a later publication devotes an independent chapter to Sikhism.¹⁹ Jack Finegan has so deeply recognised the separate identity of Sikhism that he has included it in 'The Archeology of World Religions' series.²⁰ After the publication of Juergensmeyer's article an independent chair on Sikh studies has been established at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. and an independent course on Sikh studies is being contemplated at Selly Oaks College at Birmingham. There is already a course on Sikhism in the Arts Social Sciences : An Inter-Faculty Second Level Course at the Open University. Milton Keynes and the Manchester University has already published *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism*.²¹ Sikhism as a religious tradition, and as an area of academic interest, is attracting increasing attention that was long due to it. It is hoped that it would soon get its due representation on the academic map of the world. There is now a growing awareness of the distinct status and religion of the Sikh people all over the world. The Sikh religion, it is hoped will not only attract more serious scholars in the coming days but will also actively participate in the active interaction among the diverse religious traditions of the world.

18. Macnicol, *Indian Theism*, pp. 135-139.

19. Macnicol, *The Living Religions of the Indian People*, pp. 263-268.

20. Jack Finegan, *The Archaeology of World Religions, Shinto, Islam, Sikhism*, Vol. III, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1952, pp. 536-563.

21. W.H. McLeod (editor and translator), *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism*, Manchester University Press, 1984.

Spiritual Journey and the Formation of the Persons : A Sikh Perspective

The present human life as diagnosed by the prophets, seers, preceptors, mystics, gurus, founders of various religious faiths is incomplete, imperfect, disintegrated, estranged, on bondage and is under sin. So they have set the goal of making it whole, perfect, integrated, balanced and free from bondage and sin. These divine preceptors and enlightened leaders of mankind have not only emphasised the imperfection of life but also the possibility in human life of making it perfect and full. Rather, it is only in this human life that the perfection can be achieved. The human life thus perceived is not an absurd and meaningless phenomenon but a rare occasion full of divine possibilities where the goal of life can be reached and the purpose of creation fulfilled. It is from this perspective that the human life is said to be the 'crown of creation' and a rare opportunity only to be met with after the wait and wail of millions and millions of years. The inspired and enlightened leaders of mankind have related the causes of human imperfections and have suggested ways and means of getting rid of the causes of imperfection and incompleteness.

The goal of perfection can be achieved by following the 'right path' based on the 'right understanding' of human life as revealed to the religious leaders in their visions and experiences. Often we notice differences in the causes and the ways of eradicating these causes given in the teachings of the different founders of religious traditions. These differences arise from the differences among the world-views of these teachers and also from the historical and cultural conditioning of their messages and their spirit of fulfilling,

reviving, reforming and resuscitating their preceeding religious traditions. These differences point to the vastness and infinity of the vision of so great a mystery of the divine, variety and multiplicity of its historical and cultural manifestations. The way from incompleteness to wholeness consists of spiritual practices and discipline. The efforts of the human beings to follow this path of purification is called the spiritual journey. The journey passes through the progressive process of spiritual growth consisting of the perfections of some stages and the attainment of some states. As the journey is aimed at remoulding and reformulating the human life from within the religious discipline, consists of practices capable of effecting such a change and progress of the inner life of the persons. It restores the original perfection and wholeness to life by removing its inadequacies and imperfections. In the spiritual journey the way and the goal are interdependent and interchangeable. The way leads to the goal but the attainment of the goal is nothing but the realization of the way. Love for instance is an effective means to attain union with God, but the perfection of love is the attainment of the goal of reunion.

Sikhism, from whose perspective we shall briefly discuss the spiritual journey and the process of the transformation of the human personality, comparatively speaking is a young religion. It was founded little over five hundred years ago by Guru Nanak (1469-1539). One day during his meditations Guru Nanak was taken to the Divine Presence, where he was invested with a robe of honour (of guruship), offered a cup of divine Name and was entrusted with the mission to preach the way of God to the estranged humanity in the Age of Kali.¹ Guru Nanak's message is revealed in the devotional outpourings expressed in the form of poetry, set to music and in the language of common man. Guru Nanak before his departure from the world has already founded a religious community (*sangat*) and appointed a successor. He was succeeded by nine living

1. *Shabdarth Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (Amritsar : Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, 1979), Vol. I, Majh Mahala I, Pauri 27, p. 150, Bhai Gurdas, *Varan* (Amritsar : Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, 1981), Var I, Pauri 24, p. 12, *Puratan Janam Sakhi* (edited by Bhai Vir Singh)(Amritsar : Khalsa Samachar, 1971), *Sakhi* 10, pp. 39-43.

Gurus, who are considered to be the nine different manifestations of the spirit of Nanak. Thereafter, the Guruship was endowed upon *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*—the holy scripture of the Sikhs which includes the hymns of the Sikh Gurus and of some other medieval Indian saints both from among the Hindus and the Muslims—and the holy congregation (*sangat, panth*), the later representing the body of the Guru. The decisions that the congregation takes in the presence of the holy Granth guided by its spirit are regarded as the decisions and dictates of the Guru. Through the Granth and the Panth the spirit of the Guru is ever present in the community on all the occasions for all the purposes.

Sikhism is strictly a monotheistic faith based on the unity of Godhood and the equality of mankind. It strongly denounces all distinctions based on caste, colour, race, gender etc. The God of Sikhism is not the God of any particular chosen community but the God of no religious community (*namastvan adharne*).² Perhaps Sikhism is the first religion in the religious history of mankind to provide equal opportunities and religious freedom to women and the so-called low castes in the society. There is no priestly class and the women alongwith men can also officiate on all the religious occasions. Equality is strictly maintained at all levels and on all occasions. Sikhism from its very inception is antiritualistic and also does not lay much emphasis on formal theology and intellectualism. These two aspects of the religion had in fact become obstructions in the free flow of divine spirit in the human life at the time of Guru Nanak. The message of the Guru, as referred earlier, is revealed not in any formal creed formula, any belief system but in the musical compositions full of devotional fervour meant to be sung in the congregations. What Sikhism does emphasise is the purity of practical life.

True to its great religious heritage, which includes both the Semitic and Aryan religious traditions the Sikh faith also endeavours to revive and revitalise the perennial spirit of religion and to relate it to day to day life. It focuses on reactivating and reactualizing the vital and effective forces of religion to irrigate the arid patches of

2. *Shabdarth Dasam Granth Sahib* (edited by Bhai Randhir Singh) (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1973), Vol. I, Japu, Patshahi 10, Stanza 5, p. 2.

the life with its perennial springs. It aims at purifying and spiritualizing the whole human life which can hardly be achieved by the mere mechanical repetitions of dead ritual and intellectual formulations devoid of actual living spirit.

One consequence of Sikhism's close proximity to our times is that it addresses itself to some of the issues of religious plurality and diversity which are being paced by our present day religious traditions in all their multiplicity and complexities. The solution of these issues provided by the Sikh faith can be of great help in clearing the mist and confusion even in recent times. Referring to this aspect of Sikhism, Professor Arnold Toynbee says : "Mankind's religious future may be obscure; yet one thing can be foreseen : the living higher religions are going to influence each other more than ever before, in these days of increasing communication between all parts of the world and all branches of human race. In this coming religious debate, the Sikh religion, and its scriptures and *Adi Granth* will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world. This religion itself is a monument of creative spiritual intercourse between two traditional religions whose relations have otherwise not been happy. This is a good augury."³ Having made these few general comments on the nature of this little known and often misunderstood religious tradition, we may now turn to its Guru's estimation of the human crisis and the path laid down by them to come out of it.

Sikhism is popularly known as the way, the way of the teachings of the Gurus, the well trodden path (*Panth, Gurmat Marg, Gaddi Rah*) etc. It is the way leading from transmigration and rebirth (considered to be the cycle of sufferings) to union with God and eternal life in Him. The human life according to the Sikh Gurus is a very rare occasion (*mānas janamu dulanbhu*)⁴ to be found only by the meritorious actions of the past and the grace of God. The life in the world is not an end in itself but a mid-way (*adha pandho*)⁵, and the goal is to actualize its latent divine possibilities of seeking reunion and oneness with God which is the source of all creation

3. *The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs* (translated by Trilochan Singh and others) (London : George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1965), Foreword, pp. 10-11.

4. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Suhi, Mahala 1, p. 751.

5. *Ibid.*, Vadhans Mahala 1, p. 581.

'the ground of being'. The human life is rare in the sense that the highest goal can be attained only in this life. The present life is imperfect because of separation from God but it is rare because union is to be found only in it. The goal of life envisaged in the vision of the Gurus, this is to seek reunion with God by purifying the mind of the impurities and taints of the *māyā* (illusion) and the world. The basic problem of human life is raised in the very first stanza of the *Japuji*, the basic text of Sikh religion :

How to become pure in mind ?
How to demolish the wall of illusion ?⁶

The wall of illusion is the consciousness of ego (*haumai*) and its consequences, i.e. the sense of doubt and duality (*bharam*, *dubidhā*). The consciousness of ego can be overcome by following the teachings of the Gurus which reveal the will of God (*bukam*). Thus the two paths may be clearly discerned in the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. The first is the path of *māyā* which beguiled the human mind by binding it in its temporary pleasures and leads it to death, rebirth and transmigration. The other is the path of surrender to the will of God which leads to reunion with God and perfection of human life. The above description of the nature and purpose of human life can be found in almost all the hymns of the Gurus. We cite only two examples here :

Each morning the body dost thou pamper—thou who are without realization, thoughtless and ignorant.

The Lord has thou forgotten; this body in a wild place shall life deserted.

To the Lord attach thy heart—thus mayst thou everlasting bliss enjoy.(1)

Man ! into the world hast thou come to earn profit :

Into what mean courses art thou fallen !

Know, the night of life is fast ending. (Pause-1)

Beasts and birds in gambols engage, all ignorant of death-

Like to them is man, in *Māyā*-snare caught.

Such alone shall be liberated as the holy Name contemplate.(2)

To this home that you must one day desert is your heart attached.

Of the home where you are to live, no thought you take

6. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (in English translation) Translated by Gurbachan Singh Talib (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1984), Vol. 1, *Japu*, Pauri 1, p. 1

From this snare only such shall escape as at the Master's feet
worship.(3)

Know that none but the Master can save, nor is any visible.

After searching in all four directions, to His shelter have I come.

The holy king has saved Nanak, who was drowning, (4) (3.73)

Man who in this world is a passing guest, in settling affairs is engaged.

Ignorant, he realizes not that *Māyā*-passion has gripped him.

At departure shall he be in regret, in Yama's brutal minions' grasp.(1)

Blind man ! on the brink art thou sitting :

Should it in thy destiny be recorded, live the holy Master's teaching.

(pause-1)

All manner of crops may be reaped—that which is still green, half-
ripe or ready to reap.

With sickles ready, Yama arrives with reapers.

As commanded by the Landlord, are the reaped fields measured.(2)

The first hour of night in affairs is spent; in the second art thou in
sound sleep.

In the third art engaged in low pursuits.

With the fourth is it dawn.

Never dost thou recollect Him who has granted thee life and body.(3)

May I be a sacrifice to holy company; may my life be to it dedicated.

From this is enlightenment acquired, and the All-knowing Being
met.

Saith Nanak : Thereby is beheld evermanifest the Lord, controller of
ourselves.(4)(4.74)⁷

From the above two hymns the world-view of the Sikh Gurus can easily be distinguished. The human life as envisioned in the teachings of the Guru is impermanent, full of sufferings and under the constant watch of death. The ignorance of its true nature and engagement into the short-lived pleasures and tastes of *Māyā* lead to the abode of Yama. Guru's saving knowledge is the only help whereby one can escape this path of death. The Guru constantly reminds us that in the dark night of human life, the treasure of life can be saved by being constantly awake in the Name of God and by being awakened in the light of the Divine knowledge of the Guru.

The person who having recognized the true nature of human life decides to follow the teachings of the Guru, is led on the progressive path of spiritual development and the transformation of

7. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, Siri, Mahala V, Padas 3, 73, 4.74, pp. 93-94.

the human personality. The constituents of the Sikh spiritual journey that leads to the purification of the person are seeking refuge in the teachings of the Guru (*ātam samarpan, charan sharan*) remembering the Name of God (*nām simran*) associating with the company of the holy persons of pure character (*sādh sangat, sat sangat*), singing the praise of the Lord (*kīrtan*), engaging in the service of fellow-beings (*sevā*), devoting to the life of right livelihood (*kirt karnā*), sharing one's honest earning with the fellow-beings and the needy (*vand chhaknā*), cultivating moral and ethical virtues (*sach āchār*) and having saved engaging in saving others (*tare tāre, parupkār*). as one progresses on this journey of spiritual practices the grip of the *māyā* and ego-consciousness start getting loose. The perfection is reached when one gets complete freedom from the snares of the world, the sense of ego. At the end of this journey the attitude of the person gets completely transformed. He/she comes to be a new person. His/her whole inner being is remoulded and reshaped. False illusion of ego-consciousness and self-centredness goes and one becomes totally God-centred. Now, such a person is no longer separated from God but becomes one with Him. According to the Sikh Gurus, it is not the human body that constitutes the bondage but the sense of different self and duality. Once this ignorance is dispelled, one is liberated even in body, delivered-in-life (*jīvanmukta*). Now the body is no longer a bondage but an instrument in the hands of God to promote His cause. Having escaped from the self-will one completely submits to the will of God (*hukam, razā, bhānā*). Such a delivered person having accomplished his own journey engages in the act of saving others. The enlightened person attains eternal life and death for him/her is no longer a cause of fear. He/she dies while living and in this death attains the state of deathlessness and eternal life (*sad-jīvan*). The state of perfection cannot be gained by merely understanding the theory of the way, it is to be realized in the actual life by following all the steps of the spiritual journey leading to the new life. The success of the journey depends on individual's own genuine efforts and the accompanying grace of God. The final liberation, however, is always given, it cannot be attained by individual's own efforts.

Guru Nanak in the *Japuji* has enumerated five stages through

which the journey reaches its end. These stages have been called realms (*khand*s), they are : *Dharam Khand*, *Giān Khand*, *Saram Khand*, *Karam Khand* and *Sach Khand*.⁸ The first realm of Dharma may be translated as the realm of righteousness. It connotes an awareness of the material world in all its multiplicity ordained by the law of cause and effect. It also implies the awareness that this law of cause and effect is effective in the moral and spiritual realm. The second realm is usually translated as the realm of knowledge (*giān khand*). This realm refers to the widening of human apprehension that one gains with the help of reflective imagination on the basis of the knowledge of the material world. In the realm of righteousness one is aware of one earth, its limited sources of creation but in the second realm he comes to learn of many earths, waters, fires, modes of creation etc. From the point of view of spiritual progress this ever widening awareness of vastness of the creation promotes a weakening of the grip of ego on the human mind. The third realm may be called the realm of spiritual effort (*saram khand*) where spiritual illumination blazes forth. It is in this realm that the inner consciousness of the person is reshaped and remoulded :

In that sphere are fashioned Absorption, wisdom, Enlightenment of Mind;

Forged therein is the vision of gods and mystics.⁹

The fourth *khand* is the realm of grace (*karam khand*). It is the realm of spiritual energy where the blessed heroes of different regions reside, united with God. The last realm is the realm of truth (*sach khand*), where the True One, the Source of all Creation, resides. In this realm the devotee realizes that the universe is fashioned and ordained as according to the Will of God. To describe this realm is 'as hard as steel'. These realms should not be understood as the physical realms. They are the stages of ever widening human awareness of the vastness and greatness of God. In the concluding stanza of the *Japuji*, Guru Nanak has summarized the whole spiritual

8. *Shabdārth Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Mahala 1, *Japu*, Pauris 34-37, pp. 7-8.

9. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (in English translation) Translated by Gurbachan Singh Talib), *Japuji*, Pauri 36, p. 21.

journey of Sikhism by using the metaphor of the smithy of goldsmith :

Make continence the smithy, poise the goldsmith;
The mind awakened the anvil, spiritual light the tools;
God's fear the bellows, austerity the heat and fire;
Loving devotion the crucible :
In this crucible forge the Immortal Vision.
In such holy mint shape the holy word.
This fulfillment comes to those blessed with Divine grace.
Saith Nanak : Blessed are they by the Divine glance gracious.(38)¹⁰

The above stanza clearly lays down how the vital human energies are to be used to transform the inner life. Sikhism does not subscribe to the doctrines of renunciation and asceticism. Renunciation and asceticism in Sikhism are to be practiced, while leading an active social life. One has to remain pure amidst impurities as the lotus and duck remain in the water, without being wet. Because of this world affirming attitude of Sikhism we do not find any division of human life on the pattern of four *āshramas* (stations of life) in the Hindu scheme of life and orders of monks and laymen in the Buddhist and Jaina societies. However, the process of physical growth passing through various stages is mentioned.¹¹ While mentioning these various stages of physical growth the Sikh Gurus constantly keep us reminding that all stages of life go waste if one dwells not on the Divine Name.

From the foregoing brief discussion it may be safely assumed that the Sikh faith provides an existential analysis of the crisis of human life. Having shown the illness it lays out a practical way not only of getting rid of illness but also of attaining a new divine life. The new divine life is not to be found outside the world or beyond death but in this very life. Such a liberated person does not withdraw from the active social life rather he engages himself in promoting the cause of God in regaining the lost souls, in restoring the cosmic harmony based on the principles of love, service and co-existence. It is the vision of such a life that our modern world is desperately looking for.

10. *Ibid.*, *Japu*, Mahala 1, Pauri 38, p. 22.

11. *Guru Granth Sahib*, Siri, Mahala V, p. 43, Siri, Mahala 1, Pahare, pp. 74-75, Siri, Mahala IV, Pahare, p. 76, Siri, Mahala V, Pahare, p. 77, Tukhari, Mahala 1, p. 1110.

CHAPTER-4

Nature and Tradition of Martyrdom in the Sikh Religion

The Sikh religion occupies a unique place among the Indian religions in having evolved and maintained the tradition of martyrdom right from its inception. A heroic tradition of valour and self-sacrifice is not altogether missing among the Indian religions but their ritualistic and monastic context, institution of the *varanāsharama dharma*, emphasis on asceticism, belief in the illusory nature of the world and the existence of the debased *tantric* cults have severely conditioned its growth and dynamism. Before the advent of Sikh religion India had already experienced the slavery of several centuries. The warrior castes of India had degenerated to the extent that Guru Nanak had to complain—"Khatris their true function have discarded, and to Muhammadan tongues taken",¹ and "These dogs that despoiled the jewels and wasted them. Now in their death none shall remember them."²

Among the Semitic religions—the Jews, Christians and Muslims—there was a well-developed tradition and cult of martyrs

1. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Dhanasari, M. 1, p. 663 (Translated by Gurbachan Singh Talib), *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Vol. II, (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1985), p. 1388. The complete translation of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* by Professor Gurbachan Singh Talib was published by the Punjabi University as follows :

Vol. I, 1984, pp. 1-740

Vol. II, 1985, pp. 741-1520

Vol. III, 1987, pp. 1521-2249

Vol. IV, 1990, pp. 2250-2856

In the following references it would be cited as : Trans., G.S. Talib, Vol. No., page number, alongwith the original Raga, author and original page number of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

2. *Asa*, M. 1, p. 360 (Transl. by G.S. Talib, Vol. II, p. 769).

and *shuhadā* (plural of *Shahīd*) evidence of which can be traced from the life of Jesus Christ, the Bible and the Qu'ran. However, in the late medieval centuries their expansionistic and hegemonic designs, growing religious intolerance and repression of the defenceless masses accompanied by ruthless cruelties, plunder and forcible conversions had acutely constrained the original divine purpose of the ideal and institution of martyrdom. The so-called *ghāzīs* had degenerated into bands of marauders and plunderers whom Guru Nanak had to, characterise as 'bridal procession of sin' (*pāp kī janjh*).³

The Sikh tradition emanating from Guru Nanak not only endeavoured to restore the original divine purpose of the percept and practice of martyrdom but also awakened the down-trodden and exploited classes of India towards its elevating, ennobling and transforming power thereby laying the secure foundation of all varieties of religious, social and political redemption.

Although the terms *shahīd* and *shahādat* for the Sikh concept of martyrdom were adopted from the Arabic sources in the later period but the familiarity of the Sikh Gurus with the term and cult of *shuhadā* may be traced from the *Bānī* of Guru Nanak Dev,⁴ Bhagat Ravidas⁵ and the compositions of Bhai Gurdas.⁶ The term here refers to the existence of the cult *shuhadā* (*shahīds*) in the Muslim tradition. Guru Nanak's own preference for terms such as *sur*, *jodh*, *mahābal* can be easily attested from the *Bānī*. The terms *sur*, *sūrā*, *jodhā* in varied forms have been extensively employed in Gurbani. Even in the compositions of Bhai Gurdas and the Bachittar Natak by Guru Gobind Singh, where earlier references to the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur are found, the terms *shahīd* and *shahādat* are missing. It is true that the term *shahīd* come from the Islamic sources, but it should not be misconstrued that the Sikh Gurus have borrowed the idea from Islamic sources. All the constituent elements of the Sikh concept of *shahīd* have been emphatically maintained in the *Bānī* of Guru Nanak Dev and the later Gurus. In

3. Telang, M. 1, p. 722-723.

4. Sri Raga, M. 1, p. 53.

5. Malar, Ravidas, p. 1293.

6. Bhai Gurdas, Varan 3 (18/2), 8(8/3), 21(13/2), 40(8/2).

the later period of the Sikh history the term *shahīd* became so inseparable part of the tradition that it almost replaced all the earlier terms conveying the specific Sikh connotation central to the Sikh world-view. In the Sikh usage the terms such as *shahīd*, *shahādat*, *shahīd ganj*, *shahīd misal*, *shahīd bilās*, *shahīdī jor-melā*, *shahīdī bir* etc. became household names. In the course of time the *shahīds* or martyrs came to occupy such a central and exalted place in the Sikh tradition that they were incorporated in the daily prayer of the Sikhs where they are remembered and invoked alongwith the Sikh Gurus and other central symbols and institutions of the Sikh faith. The glorious period of the Sikh history is the one in which maximum number of Sikhs courted martyrdom. The idea of *shahādat* now has become so pivotal that the Sikh life and tradition cannot be interpreted without reference to it. "It is written in 'Mekhila', a Jewish interpretative work that every commandment that the Israelites have not died for is not really established and every commandment that they have died for will be established among them."⁷ Similarly the Sikhs have established every percept and practice of their faith after repeatedly validating it with their life and blood.

The English word 'martyr' comes from Greek '*martyrs*' meaning 'witness'. Martyr is a person who chooses to suffer or die rather than give up his faith or his principles.⁸ *Chambers Everyday Paperback Dictionary* defines martyr as 'One who by his death bears witness to his belief'.⁹ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. I, has suggested its Aryan root *smer* (Whence Skr. *smar*) to remember.¹⁰ J.P.S. Oberoi explains that "In Greek the word *martyrs* comes from a supposed Indo-Aryan root (*smer*) signifying to 'remember'. It is connected with 'memory', and from the same original is derived the Sanskrit *s(u)mar(an)*. To this is added in the

7. As quoted by Samuel Z. Klausner in 'Martyrdom'. *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*. Vol. 9, (Ed. By Mircea Eliade), (New York : Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), p. 233.

8. Webster Noah, *Websters New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language* (Collins World, 1978, U.S.A.), p. 1105.

9. Edited by A.M. McDonald and E.M. Kirkpatrick (Edinburgh : W & R Chambers Ltd., 1975), p. 444.

10. *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 193.

Christian mode of thought the meaning of the Greek word *merimna*, 'care', giving us the present sense of 'one who testifies to what he remembers'.¹¹ Brandon's Dictionary relates that in Christianity the term (martyr) used originally for Apostles who witnessed life and resurrection of Christ (Avts 1:8, 22); it later described those who 'witnessed' to their faith by suffering and death during Roman persecution of Church. From 2nd century a martyr cult was established, the martyr's death being liturgically celebrated at tomb, relic venerated and acts recorded."¹² H. Thurston writes that the veneration of saints has its starting point in the veneration of the martyrs who suffered death for Christian faith.¹³ He further elaborates that "it became a common-place among the writes of 3rd century. to hold that the giving of one's life for Christ, the baptism of blood, was the equivalent of sacramental baptism in its effect of completely remitting sin and rendering the sufferer worthy of immediate admission to the joys of paradise."¹⁴ He goes on to inform that as early as fourth century the prayers were made to the martyrs alongwith patriarchs prophets and apostles.¹⁵

The Arabic term for martyr is *shahid* conveying the same meaning as *martyr* in Greek i.e. witness. *Shahid* is, primarily one who gives testimony as an eye-witness, then one who seals his testimony with blood commonly employed in the plural *shuhadā* of those who are killed fighting the battles of Islam.¹⁶ E. Kohlberg explains that the word *Shahid* is often used in the sense of "martyr". In the Qu'ran it is attested in its primary (witness) meaning (II, 282; XXIV, 4) and also occurs as one of the divine names (V, 116). Muslim scholars maintain that in a number of verses *shuhadā* means "martyrs" (III, 140). In the Holy Qu'ran the martyrs (*shuhadā*) are already ranked among the blessed (i.e. prophet, justmen, *shuahadā* and righteous (XXXIX, 69 and LVII, 19). What is not in doubt is that the Qu'ran

11. J.P.S. Uberoi, 'Martyrdom', *Seminar* 476, April, 1999, pp. 50-51.

12. S.G.F. Brandon (Editor), *A Dictionary of Comparative Religions* (London : Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970), p. 430.

13. H. Thurston (Christian), 'Saints and Martyrs', *The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XI, (Ed. James Hastings) (Edinburgh : T & T Clark, 1962), p. 52.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

16. W.M. Patton (Mohammadan), 'Saints and Martyrs' *Ibid.*, p. 63.

refers to the reward for those slain in the way of God (II, 154, III 157, 169, IV, 74, IX, 111, XLVII, 4-6).¹⁷ E. Kohlberg further describes the bliss awaiting the martyrs as elaborated in the body of traditions. He says that all the sins of the martyr will be forgiven, he will be protected from the torments of the grave; a crown of glory will be placed on his head; he will be married to seventy-two *houris* and his intercession will be accepted for upto seventy of his relations. "He further states that in the light of Quranic statement (II, 154) the martyrs are considered alive. On the bases of other traditions he relates that the spirits of the martyrs will ascend directly to Paradise, there to reside in the crows of green birds near God's throne. During the Resurrection these spirits will be returned to martyr's earthly bodies and martyrs will then be given their abode in Paradise."¹⁸

In the eschatological times martyrs will fight on the side of the Mahdi just as the early martyrs fought alongside the Prophet. Concerning the Islamic belief about the purity of the *shahīd*, J. Robson states, "Some parties hold that they do not require to be washed and shrouded before burial, but should be buried with their wounds apparent."¹⁹

As mentioned earlier, we do not find in Sanskrit dictionaries a term parallel to 'martyr' in English and *shahīd* in Arabic. Professor G.S. Talib has noticed that Apte's *Student's English-Sanskrit Dictionary* has entered against 'martyr' one or two phrase-parallels such as *deh-tyāgin* (sacrifice or forsaker of one's body i.e. life.) For *martyrdom* again we have *jīvan-tyāga* (renouncing life), *deh nyāsa* (surrender of body).²⁰ It is strange that we do not find any clearly expressed doctrine of martyrdom in Hinduism inspite of the *Gītā's* following instructions :

17. E. Kohlberg, 'Shahid', *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol IX (Ed. C.E. Bosworth, E. Van et. al.) (Leiden : Brill, 1997) pp. 203-204.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 204.

19. J. Robson, 'Martyr', *A Dictionary of Comparative Religions* (London : Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970) pp. 430-431.

20. G.S. Talib 'The Concept and Tradition of Martyrdom in Sikhism' in *Guru Tegh Bahadur Background and Supreme Sacrifice* (Ed. G.S. Talib) (Patiala : Punjabi Univeristy, 1976). p. 180. In the following references this work would be cited as G.S. Talib (Ed.), *Guru Tegh Bahadur*.

Better one's own duty(tho) imperfect,
 Than anothers duty well performed;
 Better death in (doing) one's own duty;
 Another's duty brings danger.(III:35)²¹

Professor Talib has drawn our attention to the Indian practice of self-immolation by holy persons for the sake of *dharma* that comes close to the Semitic concept of *shahīd*. He relates, "There are instances of Brahmins, *rishis* and other holy persons, deflecting a tyrant from his evil designs through the resolve of self-immolation...any infringement of the code of *Dharma* by a potentate or tyrant would draw to his portal some person held holy who would give up food and resolve to fast unto death unless the wrong was righted."²² Prof. Talib further maintained that the unique concept of *sankalpa* (firm and solemn resolve) was in existence in Hinduism. In his views *sankalpa* is the spiritual preparatory stage towards martyrdom.²³ In the Puranic literature of Hinduism there are instances of circumstances that might have resulted in martyrdom as in the case of Prahlada or Draupadi but the situation takes a different turn with the miraculous intervention of Lord Vishnu.

In the Buddhist literature we do not find any elaborate doctrine of martyrdom. "The real martyrology of Buddhism" says E.J. Thomas, "is the Jataka commentary, which records the sufferings and repeated death of the *bodhisattva* and his disciples, especially in exhibiting the virtues of patience and self-sacrifice."²⁴ The Buddhist and Jain doctrines of *Ahimsā* (non-violence) proved counter-productive to the emergence of the doctrine of martyrdom among Indian religions. The Sikh emphasis on the need of martyrdom for the sake of *dharma* is thus unique among the religions of Indian origins.

The Sikhs perhaps are the first among the Indian religions to have adopted the Arabic term *shahīd* to describe their own brethren who laid down their lives for the sake of their faith. Before the Sikh

21. Franklin Edgerton, (Trans. & Interpretation) *The Bhagavad Gītā* (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 21.

22. G.S. Talib (Ed.), *Guru Tegh Bahadur*, p. 180.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

24. E.J. Thomas, 'Saints and Martyrs' (Buddhists) in *The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, *op.cit.*, p. 50.

adoption, it seems that the term *shahīd* had gained wide currency among the common folks. The following verses from Punjabi literature bear witness to the fact :

- (a) "*Shāh Hussain shahādat pāwan
jo maran mitrān de agge.*"
(Those who die for the sake of their loved ones, says Shah Hussain, attain martyrdom)
- (b) "*Je Rabb kook Sassī dī sunāsī
Jā pallā us pharsān.
Hāsham nahīn shahīdān ho ke
thal mārū vich marsān.*"
(If the God responds to the cries of Sassi she will succeed in tracing him (Pannu). Otherwise she will die in the desert as martyr, says Hasham.)

In comparison to the terms *jodh* (warrior), *sūr* (hero) employed extensively in the *Gurbānī* and which conveyed the meaning of heroic deeds of great physical strength, the Islamic term *shahīd* had already acquired spiritual connotation in addition to the heroic deeds of the warriors of faith. In *Gurbānī* and Bhai Gurdas, we find reference to the existence of an elaborate cult of the *shuhadā* in Islam. One of the main objects of the Sikh Gurus was to spiritualise the great struggle that was going on for a considerable period of time against the despotic, cruel and intolerant rulers of the day. Whenever the Gurus refer to the warriors and heroic people they always emphasise the need to spiritualise it. Bhagat Kabir defines the real hero as follows :

The true hero is one who fights in defence of the humble;
Is cut limb after limb, and flees not the field.²⁵

Guru Arjan Dev also emphasises that the true hero is one who is dyed in the love of God :

In this age such alone are designated as *true* heroes,
As in love of the Lord are dyed.²⁶

25. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Maru, Kabir, p. 1105, (Trans. by G.S.Talib, Vol. III, p. 2246).

26. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Dhanasari M. 5, p. 680, (Trans. by G.S.Talib, Vol. II, p. 1418).

In Raga Wadhans Guru Nanak Dev unveils in detail the true nature of death that occurs fighting for the holy cause :

People of the world ! revile not death, should one know how to die.
Serve the Lord Almighty—thereby shall your path hence be made
easy.

As this easy path you tread, reward shall you receive.
And exaltation in the hereafter.

Holy is the death of heroic men,
whose dying is Divinely-approved.
Such alone may be called heroes as at
the Divine-Portal obtain true honour.
Obtaining honour at the Divine Portal, with honour they depart,
And in the hereafter undergo not suffering.
Such reward they shall obtain if on the Sole Lord they meditate,
Whose service all fears drives away
Their suffering they utter not aloud; all in their mind they bear—
The Lord Himself knows all.
Holy is the death of heroic men,
whose dying is Divinely-approved.²⁷

Elaborating the Sikh emphasis on the spiritual content of the Sikh doctrine of martyrdom, Professor Talib says : "In the Sikh conception of the term, however, a deliberate choice to suffer death for the sake of religious belief is crucial to martyrdom. Heroism and martyrdom both involve exemplary courage, but the courage in a martyr is more deep-rooted, more moral than physical, and is born of spiritual conviction rather than love of worldly gain or glory."²⁸

The Sikh Gurus have repeatedly maintained that the death and self-sacrifice accepted at the Divine Portal of God as martyrdom is the one which results from unrelenting, constant and committed struggle deeply rooted in moral and spiritual grounds, Guru Gobind Singh has blessed only that struggle of the saint-warriors that drives its inspiration from the Divine sources :

27. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Wadhans, M. 1, pp. 579-80, (Trans. by G.S. Talib, Vol. II, p. 1223)

28. G.S. Talib, 'Martyrdom', *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, Vol. 3, (Ed. Harbans Singh), (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1997), p. 55.

Blessed be he whose tongue lauds God.
 And who in mind contemplates holy war.
 This perishable frame shall not last;
 Let man through sacrifice sail in the ship of glory,
 And thereby swim across the ocean of the world,
 His body the home of spiritual poise,
 His mind aglow like a lamp lit;
 With the broom of God-realization,
 Should he sweep away the dust-heap of cowardice.²⁹

Keeping in mind the Sikh emphasis on moral and spiritual goals of life, Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha defines *shahīd* as the one, "who attains martyrdom; who accomplishes exemplary task and who has sacrificed his life in the holy war."³⁰

Explaining the need and significance of the martyrdom for humanity, Joginder Singh writes: "Humanity needs martyrs who refuse to accept injustice, selfishness, stupidity and moral ugliness; who give their lives to set free the Divine attributes of love, goodness, wisdom and beauty."³¹

Unlike the other earlier saints and Bhagats Guru Nanak did not turn a deaf ear towards the prevailing ills of the society and religion. He fearlessly chose to utter the truth unmindful of the consequences. Portraying the lawlessness, injustice and degenerated nature of the prevalent religious sects Guru Nanak sings the following 'paecans of blood':

Friend Lalo! as descends to me the Lord's Word I express it.
 Babar with wedding party of sin from Kabul rushed down,
 And forcibly demanded surrender of Indian womanhood.
 Then went modesty and righteousness into hiding.
 And falsehood was strutting about in glory.
 Set aside were Kazis and Brahmins, and satan went about solemnizing
 marriages.
 Muslim women, reciting the Koran, in their affliction called on
 Khudā.

29. *Dasam Granth*, 'Krishnavatar', Stanza 2492, (Trans.) by G.S. Talib, (Ed.) *Guru Tegh Bahadur*, p. 193.

30. Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha, *Mahan Kosh* (Patiala : Punjab Languages Department, 1974), pp. 139-140.

31. Joginder Singh, 'Foreword', *Sikh Martyrs* (by Bhagat Lakshman Singh) (Ludhiana : Lahore Book Shop), p. V.

Other women of lower castes and of the Hindus in *this suffering* to include in your account.

Saith Nanak : Divine Beloved ! Sung are paeanes of blood.
And sprinkled is blood for saffron.(1)

Nanak utters the word of truth—

Truth he utters; truth the time calls for.(2) ³²

At another place Guru Nanak unveils the over-all degenerated conditions of the age as follows :

Kali-yuga is turned knife, rulers butchers;

Righteousness on wings is flown.

This is the dark night of evil;

The moon of truth is nowhere visible, nor risen.

For *light* have I searched to distraction—

No path in this darkness is visible.

Humanity in egoism involved, in suffering wails

This Nanak seek to know : How may liberation then be found ?(1)³³

Centuries of slavery had demoralized the Indian people. Misplaced emphasis on non-violence made the people coward, monasticism and asceticism introduced new imbalances in the society. The rulers were cruel, intolerant and insensitive towards the sufferings of the people. The Qazis had grown corrupt and arrogant and the traditional modes of worship came to be reduced to mere ritualistic performance without the sense of truth and meaning. This in brief were the prevailing social and religious conditions which Guru Nanak sought to reform and rejuvenate.

Guru Nanak proclaimed God as Truth, the way to realize the Truth as truthful living. The truthful living cannot be practised without encountering falsehood and the fears associated with it. Such a proclamation prepares the ground for active resistance to falsehood and evil. The nature of God as revealed by Guru Nanak is 'without fear' and 'without rancour'. It follows that the Sikh should not entertain enmity towards anyone but he should also not be afraid of anyone. Guru Tegh Bahadur characterizes the liberated person as :

32. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Telang, M. 1, pp. 722-723 (Trans. by G.S. Talib, Vol. II, pp. 1502-1503).

33. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Raga Majh, Slok M. 1, p. 145 (Trans. by G.S. Talib, Vol. I, p. 299).

One that strikes not terror in others,
 Nor of others stand in fear—
 Saith Nanak : Listen my self,
 Know such a one to be liberated.(16)³⁴

While treading the path of truthfulness, if one encounters death, that death is not something to be afraid of such a death bestows glory on this life and the life hereafter. For Guru Nanak the true religion does not consist in uttering some sacred formulas and performing certain prescribed rituals. Guru Nanak's religion demands total surrender of one's life to the will of God and also promises total fulfilment as a consequence of it :

Shouldst thou seek to engage in game of love,
 Step into my street with thy head placed on thy palm.
 While on to this stepping,
 Ungrudgingly sacrifice your head.(20)³⁵

Guru Ram Dass, the fourth Guru describes the sacred resolve of the true devotee on the path of God as follows :

If joy shouldst Thou grant,
 to Thee would I still be devoted;
 In suffering too on Thee would I meditate.(2)
 Should it *please Thee* to give me hunger,
 still would I feel fulfilled,
 And in suffering feel joy.(3)
 Cutting body and person to pieces would I make offering,
 And in fire immolate myself.(4)³⁶

The Sikh Gurus not only preached idealism, they taught by precept and practice when the occasion arrived for it. Guru Arjan Dev endured all the tortures and sufferings remaining totally calm in the Will of God thereby laying the lasting foundation of long tradition of martyrdom in Sikhism. Bhai Gurdas informs us about the state of mind of the Guru even in the face of fiercest of tortures :

"In the extremest hours of suffering nothing entered his mind except the Divine Lord."³⁷

34. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Slok M. 9, p. 1427, (Trans. by G.S.Talib, Vol. IV, p. 2849).

35. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Slok, M. 1, p. 1412, (Trans. by G.S.Talib, Vol. IV, p. 2821).

36. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Suhi, M. 4, p. 757, (Trans. by G.S.Talib, Vol. III, p. 1574).

37. Bhai Gurdas, *Varan* 24/23, (Trans. by G.S. Talib, (Ed.) *Guru Tegh Bahadur*, p. 195).

Guru Arjan Dev laid down his life for the sake of *dharma*. Jahangir wanted to close down "shop of falsehood", which had been irritating him for a considerable period of time. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi's happiness at the execution of the Guru proved too short-lived. Guru Arjan Dev, during his occupancy of Guruship built several institutions of lasting significance such as the completion of Harimandar Sahib, compilation of the *Adi Granth*, the consolidation of institutions of *daswandh* and *masands*, founding of new towns such as Tarn Taran, Kartarpur, etc. His martyrdom put the Sikh religion on eternal foundations. Secondly, the Guru sacrificed his life opposing religious intolerance as is clear from the records of *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* and the letters (*Maktubat-i-Imām Rabbānī*) of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi. Thirdly, the Guru laid down his life to defy the unjust rulers by refusing to pay the unjust fines imposed on him. The Guru's martyrdom gave a new impetus to the growth and spread to Sikhism. It opened the way of the institutions of Akāl Takhat and *Miri Piri*.

The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur was unparalleled in the history of world religions. ("None ever performed a noble deed like Tegh Bahadur's"—Bachittar Natak). The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur discloses all the meanings for which the Sikh doctrine and institution of martyrdom stands for. He laid down his life for the sake of *dharma*. He sacrificed his life for the sake of right of other's religious freedom. He went ahead with the firm resolve to court martyrdom. During his trial he refused to resort to the show of miraculous powers and remained calm to the last. Bachittar Natak deftly sums up the details of his heroic martyrdom as follows :

The Lord protected their paste-mark and sacred thread.
 And in Kali-yuga performed a mighty deed.
 To defend the righteous he spared no sacrifice;
 Gave away his head, but uttered not a groan.
 For defending righteousness he enacted this great deed;
 Sacrificed life and but not his ideal.
 He spurned the exhibition of theatrical acts of miracle-mongering,
 Such as would shame devotees of God.
 Breaking the potsherd of his body on the head of the monarch of
 Delhi;
 He departed for the Celestial realm;

None ever performed a noble deed like Tegh Bahadur's.
 At Tegh Bahadur's departure the world was plunged in grief;
 The world wailed,
 But the Celestial Realms resounded with glory.³⁸

A popular poem prevalent among the Sikhs befittingly sums up the message of the life and martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur :

"So said Guru Tegh Bahadur;
 One should lay down ones life instead of forsaking one's faith".

Two of the devoted Sikhs, Bhai Matidas and Bhai Satidas, accompanying Guru Tegh Bahadur attained martyrdom before his eyes. They were done to death in a most inconceivable and cruel method. One was boiled alive in a cauldron and the other was burnt alive.

From now onwards demand for offering one's life for the sake of one's faith became inseparable part of the tradition. What Guru Nanak had demanded from the seekers of divine love, figuratively now became the first requirement for the newly initiated Sikhs. The choosing of the five beloved ones at the initiation ceremony of the *Khālsā* is an archetypal model of this demand. From the Vaisakhi of 1699 the first stipulation for the desirous seekers of faith was the readiness to offer one's head to the Guru. From this period of Sikh history it is not easy to keep an account of the number of people who courted martyrdom for the sake of *dharma* and for the glory of the *panth*. These martyrs include the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh, two of them at the tender age of seven and nine; forty *muktās*, Bhai Mani Singh, Baba Deep Singh, Baba Banda Singh and thousands and thousands of others. They laid down their lives for the sake of *dharma*, for the sake of freedom of worship, for the protection of the Sikh values, for the protection of Sikh institutions, for the protection of the honour and dignity of women, for the sake of down-trodden and repressed ones, etc. The Sikh martyrs include both men and women. It is now almost inconceivable to think of Sikh faith and tradition without reference to its institution of martyrdom.

38. *Dasam Granth*, 'Bachittar Natak', Chap. 5, Stanzas 13-16 (Trans. by G.S. Talib, (Ed.) *Guru Tegh Bahadur*, p. 196).

In the Bachittar Natak, Guru Gobind Singh explicitly states threefold aim of his life. These aims include the propagation of *dharma*, protection of the saints and destruction of the evil-doers root and branch.³⁹ Guru's portrayal of God repeatedly maintains that He is the destroyer of wicked and evil-minded. Elaborating the profession of *Khālsā*, Bhai Nand Lal states that the *Khālsā* is one who fights among the front ranks.⁴⁰ The *Khālsā* is one who protects the poor, the *Khālsā* is one who destroys the evil-minded.⁴¹ With the initiation of the *Khālsā* constant struggle both inward and outward became the life-style in Sikhism. Death which had become a fearsome phenomenon among the Indian people received new meanings in the Sikh faith. It became the cherished goal, leading to the fulfilment of life. He who dies for the righteous cause attains liberation. The forty Sikhs who died in the battle of Mukatsar (Khidrana) came to be designated as 'forty liberated ones' and they are remembered twice a day at the time of prayer in every Sikh home. Guru Gobind Singh in a prayer to the Almighty seeks the boon of laying down life on the battlefield fighting for the sake of righteousness :

Lord ! grant me this boon;
 Never may I turn back from righteousness;
 May I never turn back in fear when face to face with the foe;
 May I ever instruct my mind to chant Thy praises;
 And when the end arrives,
 May I fall fighting on the field of battle.⁴²

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries systematic and sustained attempts were made by the despotic Mughal rulers to completely wipe out the emerging Sikh community. We have already alluded to the evidence of *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* in this regard. The same reasons i.e. to extirpate the Sikh community, may be traced behind the martyrdoms of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh and thousands and thousands of others. The

39. *Dasam Granth*, 'Bachittar Natak', Chap. 8, Stanza 43.

40. Ganda Singh (Ed.), *Bhai Nand Lal Granthawali*, (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1989), Tankhahnama, Stanza 44, p. 228.

41. *Ibid.*, Stanza 50, p. 228.

42. *Dasam Granth*, 'Chandi Charitra', Stanza 231 (Trans. by G.S. Talib (Ed.) *Guru Tegh Bahadur*, p. 192).

following examples from the Sikh history illustrate the above-noted evil designs of the tyrant rulers. Teja Singh, Ganda Singh in their *A Short History of the Sikhs* Vol. I, record :

"Khan Bahadur (Zakrya Khan)...sent out moving columns in all directions to hunt out Sikhs and to bring them to book. Prices were fixed on their heads, Every morning punitive parties would issue from Lahore, and combing out villages and forests would bring in batches of Sikhs in chains. They were tortured in different ways and beheaded in public at place called *Nakhas* or horse market outside the Delhi Gate. To make an example of them their heads were piled up in the form of pyramids, which the Sikhs called *Shahidganj* or "treasure-troves of martyrdom."⁴³

At another place Teja Singh Ganda Singh report about the royal edict of Farrukh Siyar issued with a view to wipe out the Sikh community. They relate, "An edict was issued by Farrukh Siyar directing that any Sikh falling into the hands of the officers should, on a refusal to embrace the Mohammadan faith, be put to the sword. A reward was also offered for the head of every Sikh."⁴⁴

Even during those dark times the Sikh spirit was as triumphant as ever. In the *Shahid Bilas* by Seva Singh, Bhai Mani Singh is reported to have reaffirmed at the time of his execution :

Dharam het ham de haiṇ prān.

*Nahīn Turk kī mānai kān.*⁴⁵

(We lay down our lives for the cause of our faith.

We do not succumb to the ego of autocrat Turks.)

If the Sikhs survived in the face of all these sustained cruelties and executions, it was by the sheer force of their spirit of resistance to evil and their readiness to follow the path of martyrdom shown by their Gurus. Martyrdom is not only the inseparable part of the Sikh way of life, Principal Teja Singh has also characterized it as a unique feature of the Sikh faith.⁴⁶

43. Teja Singh, Ganda Singh, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, Vol. 1 (Patiala : Punjabi Univeristy, 1989), p. 111.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

45. Giani Garja Singh (Ed.), *Shahid Bilas* (by Seva Singh) (Ludhiana : Punjabi Sahit Academy, 1961), p. 90.

46. Teja Singh, *Sikh Sabhiyachar ate Hore Dharmic Lekh* (Pd.) (Amritsar : Sharomani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, 1999), pp. 111-124.

The martyrs occupy a very high status in the Sikh religious life. According to *Japuji* (Stanza XXXVII), the 'men of awakened courage and great deeds' are denizens of the Realm of Grace (*Karam Khand*), only second to the Realm of Truth (*Sach Khand*). In the Sikh congregational prayer the martyrs are remembered only after the Ten Sikh Gurus. Many Gurdwaras are built to commemorate the memory of the martyrs.

Guru Gobind Singh at Mukatsar has blessed all the forty martyred Sikhs as liberated ones (*mukte*). The pictures of the martyrs figure prominently in the Sikh museums. The martyrdom days of the renowned martyrs are annually celebrated at the places associated with their martyrdom. The heroic deeds of the martyrs are sung by the traditional ballad singers (*dhādhīs*) in the Sikh congregations. Guru Nanak, as quoted earlier, lays down :

Holy is the death of heroic men,
whose dying is Divinely-approved
Such alone may be called heroes as at
the Divine Portal obtain true honour.
Obtaining honour at the Divine-portal with
honour they depart.
And in the hereafter undergo not suffering.⁴⁷

Although there is no systematic theology or dogma evolved around the Sikh ideal and institution of martyrdom it is clear from the above verses of Guru Nanak that those who die in the approved way of God attain glory and are liberated here and hereafter. The lives and heroic deeds of the Sikh martyrs are permanent source of inspiration for the faith. One unique feature of the Sikh ideal of martyrdom is that they not only die for the sake of their own faith but also do not hesitate to lay down their lives for the sake of the freedom of worship of other religions as shown by Guru Tegh Bahadur. There are few martyrdoms in world history that transcend the traditional boundaries of their faith such as Socrates, Mansūr al-Hallāj, etc. Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom can undoubtedly be counted in this category.

In the traditional Indian society, the poor, the cow and women-

47. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Wadhans, M. 1, pp. 579-580 (Trans. by G.S. Talib, Vol. II, p. 1223).

folk were considered symbols of weakness, meekness and humility. During the aggression of the power-mad invaders they were the first victims. The Sikh people take special pride in the act of protection of the poor, women and cow. Professor Talib relates, "The Sikh people have been particularly sensitive bearing themselves in a highly disciplined puritanical character, to the dishonour of women-folk by power-drunk marauders, and have on several occasions, even when they were themselves hunted and persecuted by the Mughals in the early and mid-eighteenth century fallen upon large hordes to secure the captured women folk of India."⁴⁸

The Martyrs are life blood of the Sikh community. Without the sacrifices of the martyrs the shape of the community cannot be conceived. They are the perennial source of inspiration for leading a faithful and devoted life without fear and enmity. The lives and heroic deeds of the *shahīds* also inspire the community to wage a relentless struggle against evil. According to the popular Sikh faith the martyrs are considered immortal and they always accompany the great saints and religious nobles. It is also part of the popular Sikh belief that at the eschatological time the martyrs would accompany Kalki to inaugurate the Golden Age or the reign of Truth after inflicting final defeat on evil.

48. G.S. Talib (Ed.), *Guru Tegh Bahadur*, pp. 184-85.

===== CHAPTER-5 =====

Guru Nanak : Apostle of Religio-Social Goodwill and Amity

Sikhism is relatively quite a young and modern religion. Guru Nanak the founder of the faith lived in the later half of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century, the religion founded by Guru Nanak, because of its peculiar nature, has come to be interpreted differently by different scholars. Majority of the Western scholars have found it to be an unconscious or deliberate fusion of the Hindu Muslim traditions. The majority of the Hindu scholars views it as a reform or revival movement within the fold of Hinduism. Majority of the Sikh interpreters proclaim Sikhism as an original religion based on the direct revelation of the Divine. Such contradictory but complementary view points exist because of the unique nature of Sikhism as an effort to create harmony, goodwill and amity among the religiously, socially, politically discordant, diversified and disputing people.

To the Muslims the arrogance of power and the religious degeneration that power and puff brings, had corrupted and to the Hindus the repressive regime of the Muslims and the ritualistic formulations and the caste bondage of the Brahmins had corrupted. There were Muslims and Hindus but no religious people. The common masses were confused and bewildered about the true nature of religion. The sects were multiplying but the true religion was declining and fading out. The great savant and poet Bhai Gurdas a close relative and associate of the third, fourth, fifth and sixth Gurus has very appropriately summed up the overall, prevalent decadent state of religion in the following manner :

“Degeneration occurred in the world, leading to the four caste-divisions, and enactments about four stages of life; the Sanyasis into ten, and the Yogis were divided into twelve sects;

Various orders of hermits, Jain monks and the unclad recluses set up
 endless recriminating debate;
 The Brahmins set up strife on the manifold interpretations of Shastras,
 Vedanta and Puranas;
 The six sects proliferated through mutual strife into thirty-six varieties
 of superstitious falsehood;
 Many engaged in black magic, the search for the elixir of life and in
 various corruptions;
 Truth indivisible was divided and sub-divided into numerous ugly
 shapes;
 Truly, Kaliyuga led men into mazes of illusion, (Stanza 19)
 Many were the streams that flowed, and so appeared Mohammad with
 his companions;
 His followers too divided into seventy-two sects and spread strife in
 manifold ways;
 He made current the Fast, Id and Namaz and imposed a new ritual
 on the world;
 Among Muslims appeared various orders of religious teachers of
 various sects.
 The Mohammadans pulled down Hindu temples and erected
 mosques in their place;
 They slaughtered the humble cow and spread foul sin on the earth;
 Their minds filled with hate for all other creeds.
 Calling them Kafirs, Mulahid and such others.
 Sin spread all the world over. (Stanza 20)
 Hinduism and Mohammadanism, each was divided into four sects;
 Strife was wide-spread among men, who were filled with egoism
 meanness and pride;
 Ganga and Banaras were sacred to the Hindus, as were Mecca and
 Kabba to the Mohammadans;
 The Mohammadan was firm on circumcision, while the Hindu was
 devoted to the sacred thread and the paste mark;
 The names of Ram and Rahim, Manifesting One Reality, yet their
 diversity led men astray from the path of Truth;
 All forgot the Veda and the Koran, and followed Satan on the way
 of greed and worldliness;
 Truth was caste aside; and Brahmins and Maulvis clashed each with
 each bitterly;
 None practised the way of escape from transmigration."¹ (Stanza 21)

1. Gurbachan Singh Talib, *Guru Nanak : His Personality and Vision*, Gurdas Kapur and Sons Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1969, pp. 23-24 (Translation of the stanzas 19-21 of the first *Var* of Bhai Gurdas).

The perennial spirit and ennobling inspiration of religion had come to be encrusted and obliterated with the veils of manmade boundaries of caste, creed, races and meaningless rituals and ritualistic observations. Such were the challenges which Guru Nanak accepted and such was the degeneration which he resolved to check from further deterioration and to improve. For the amelioration of the degenerated condition of the people, Guru Nanak devised a very noble and practicable approach. He visited every accessible religious centre and religious leader to wean them away from the false and divisive religious exercises and to involve them in his own positive programme to awaken the people to the perennial springs of religious inspiration and to promote mutual trust and harmony. For the accomplishment of the above purpose he went to 'Ganga Banaras' and also 'Mecca Kaaba' in addition to innumerable religious leaders and centres of the Muslims, Hindus, Yogis and others.

The holy ministry of the Guru began with a highly attracting but at the same time severely admonishing utterance :

'There is no Hindu and no Mussalman'.

The people had wrongfully identified religion with outward forms, there were neither true Hindus nor true Muslims. In their ignorance the Hindus and the Muslims were set against each other. For the Hindus the Muslims were Malecchas and for the Muslims Hindus were Kafirs.

Fortunately, for Guru Nanak, there was already a tiny minority of the Sants, Yogis and Şūfis, who were already striving to bridge the ever widening gulf between the two communities of the Hindus and the Muslims in their own limited spheres. Two reasons for which their endeavour could not gain much success at the social level was their emphasis on monastic life and their other worldly attitude. They could appreciate each other's religious convictions, but they failed to evoke any positive response at the social level. Socially the people remained divided in the name of Hinduism and Islam.

Among the Muslims the Şūfis were relatively more open-minded and tolerant towards other faiths than the *Ulama*. Their attachment to the spirit was more firm than to formalism. Their

prayer and worship in relation to the *Ulama* was less formal and more close to the inner spirit. The following saying amply explains the difference between the attitudes of *Qazis* and *Şūfis*. Shaikh Jajal-al-Din Tabrizian, eminent disciple of Shaikh Shihab-al-Din Suhrawardi (A.D. 1144-1234) is said to have told *qazi* of Badaun that when *Şūfis* offered prayers they found themselves facing God, while the *Ulama* could never see God but only turned their face towards the direction of Ka'ba.²

The *Şūfis* were also at variance with the *Ulama* with respect to their method of proselytizing. They mostly used the weapon of love and persuasion than the sword and repression. However, some *Sūfi* orders also employed the state machinery for the purpose of poselytizing. The Suhrawardis, for example, accepted the administrative posts and accumulated wealth.³ Whereas the Chistis, before the time of Akbar, kept themselves aloof from the state.⁴

Innumerable *Şūfis* too have undergone untold sufferings at the hands of the orthodox *qazis* and emperors. The example of Hallāj (d. 922) is unparalled in the history of sufferings at the hands of the bigoted orthodox. During the time of Aurangzeb, famous *Sūfi* saint Sarmad too met the same fate.

It may also be noted that almost all the orders of the *Şūfis*, who were relatively more liberal and tolerant towards the other religions, subscribed to the doctrine of 'Wahdatu-I-Wujud' expounded by Sheikh Muhiuddin Ibnu' I Arabi (A.D. 1165-1240).

"Ibnu-I-Arabi's conception of 'Wahdatu-I-Wujud' is an extension of the Islamic doctrine of *Tauhid*. From the doctrine that 'there exists but one God,' he takes us to the profession that 'there is nothing in existence except God...' Ibnu-I-Arabi's system implied the immanence of the Divine Being."⁵ The idea of 'Wahdatu-I-Wujud' (Unity of being) by implication accepts the manifestation of God in other religions also thus leading to the acceptance of the

2. *Fawa'id al Fu'ad* as quoted by S.A.A. Rizvi, 'Indian Şūfism and Guru Nanak', *Perspectives on Guru Nanak*, edited by Prof. Harbans Singh (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1975), p. 197.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 219.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Yusuf Hussain, *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture*, (Asia Publishing House, New Delhi), p. 50.

plurality of religions. To prove such implications of the doctrine, Yusuf Husain quoted Abul Fazl, who wrote :

"O God, in every temple I see people that seek
Thee, and in every language I hear spoken people praise Thee !
Polytheism and Islam feel after Thee !
Each religion says, "Thou art one, without equal."6

However, Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi Naqshbandi—a strong supporter of the orthodoxy the chief disciple of Khwaja Baqi Billah (A.D. 1563-1603) seventh in the line of succession from Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshband (A.D. 1317-1389), the founder of order, fought tooth and nail against the doctrine of 'Wahdatu'l Wujud' and he propounded his own doctrine of "Wahdatu' I Shuhud' (apparentism) or the 'unity of vision'. Yusuf Husain elaborating his doctrine explains : "The Mujaddid rejected the principle of immanence as contrary to the ethical life of Muslims. His polemic was directed against the mystic doctrine of an undifferentiated reality in which all individuality is lost. The pantheistic mergence of personality in God cancels the idea of human personality and its responsibility before God. It also cancels moral valuation and distinction and denies freedom. According to Islamic teachings, Mujaddid maintains that God comprehends everything and is nearer to us than our life-vein, as the Qu'ran has put it. The nature of this comprehension and nearness is beyond human understanding. The stage of 'abdiyal' or servitude can only be reached when one is completely free from all kinds of worldly attachments. The relation between man and God is that of slave and master, or that of the worshipper and worshipped."7

It is pertinent to mention here that it was the same Mujaddid-i-Alif Sani who pleased at the martyrdom of the fifth Guru Arjan Dev wrote to Farid Bukhari, entitled Murtaza Khan, the governor of Lahore. "The execution at this time of the accursed *Kafir* of Goindwal...with whatever motive...is an act of highest grace for the followers of Islam."8

6. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

8. *Maktubat-i-Imam Rabbani*, Vol. I, part III, letter No. 193 as quoted by Ganda Singh, 'Guru Nanak's Impact on History', *Sources on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak* (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1969), p. 417.

It is also noteworthy in this context that Aurangzeb was the disciple of Khwaja Muhammad M'asum son of the Mujaddid.⁹ It was the exclusive and rigid attitude of the Islamic orthodoxy which was responsible for the forcible conversions to Islam and proved fatal for the harmonious growth of social equality and religious co-existence. It was against this attitude that Sikhism had to carry a long drawn battle. The main reason behind the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur was also this orthodoxy and repressive policy of the Muslim emperors and the *Ulamas*. Beyond the above particular reason Sikhism never entertained any enmity or ill-will against the Muslims and the Islam.

At this point, we may again turn to the message of Guru Nanak and his endeavours to promote and propagate harmonious social relations and religious co-existence, based on the love of God and equality of mankind. The basic principle of Guru Nanak's teachings is the unity of Godhead. The belief in the basic unity of God comes very close to the Islamic belief of *Tauhid*. The Islamic attitude towards the believers of one God is that of qualified acceptance as is illustrated by the following dialogue :

"Once Shaikh Rizq Allah asked his father, Shaikh Sa'd Allah,' was the famous Kabir, whose verses everyone recites, a Muslim or a *Kāfir* ? His father said,' 'He was a *muwahhid* (monotheist) Shaikh Rizq Allah further asked, 'Is a muwahhid different from a *Kāfir* or a Muslim ?' Shaikh Sa'd Allah replied, "It is difficult to understand this truth you will gradually learn it."¹⁰ But the God of Guru Nanak is Allāh and Rām at the same time. He is transcendent as well as immanent, Creator as well as prevalent in the creation. He is not the God of any particular race, community or sex. He is the God of all. He is the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of all. All are under the Divine Order, there is no one without it. This idea of God is universal in spirit and humanitarian in its application. It aims at unifying the whole mankind on the principle of fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. There was no one to challenge the belief of Guru Nanak. At the religious level it aims at levelling all the

9. Yusuf Hussain, *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture*, p. 59.

10. As quoted by S.A.A. Rizvi, 'Indian Sufism and Guru Nanak', *Perspective on Guru Nanak*, p. 200.

disparities existing between different traditions and at the social level it aims at promoting human brotherhood and equality.

Guru Nanak's principle of God thus lays firm foundation of true universalism. The primary meaning of universalism as elaborated in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* is "the setting aside of the belief that a nation or a race is privileged to enjoy the special protection and favour of God, or of a deity whom it recognizes as peculiarly its own; and contemplates all nations and races as standing actually or potentially; in one and the same relation to one and the same God."¹¹

Alongwith the belief in the unity of God and brotherhood of man, Guru Nanak emphatically recognises the religious pluralism. All people can attain the grace and favour of God provided their prayer and worship—whatever may be its form—is pure. The Guru tells the Muslim to be a good Muslim, to the Hindu to be a good Hindu and to the Yogi to be a true Yogi. He lays down that if a Muslim is a good Muslim his *Namaz* and *Roza* is pure, his quest for God is genuine, then he is a good Sikh too and his compositions can be included in the scripture of the Sikhs. This is a revolutionary practice laid down by the Sikh Gurus and has remained part and parcel of the Sikh life ever since its inception. It is in this sense that Professor Puran Singh a contemporary Sikh poet calls Walt Whitman a Sikh of the Guru.¹² The Sikh history is replete with such examples. The Sikh Gurus happily associated with devoted people from among the other faiths. According to the *Puratan Janam Sakhi*¹³ Baba Nanak is shown to be parting from Shaikh Farid (of course he cannot be the renowned Baba Shaikh Farid) after staying with him for a few days and singing the following hymn :

Come sisters of my soul ! embrace we
one another, closest companions;
Get together and discourse on the Almighty Lord.
Holy Lord ! all qualities are Thine, all faults ours(I).

11. James Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, T&T Clark (Edinburgh), Vol. 12. p. 529.

12. Puran Singh, *Walt Whitman and the Sikh Inspiration*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1982, p. 5.

13. Bhai Vir Singh (ed.), *Puratan Janam Sakhi*, Khalsa Samachar, Amritsar, 1971, pp. 86-94.

Lord-Creator ! all by Thy might are sustained.
 This one Word we contemplate : With Thee with us,
 What need of another ?¹⁴

According to an old tradition the foundation stone of the Harimandar Sahib (Golden Temple) is said to have been laid down by Sain Mian Mir (A.D. 1550-1635) a renowned Qadiri Shaikh of Lahore. Mian Mir maintained regular contacts with Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Hargobind. Pir Buddhu Shah of Sadhora fought with Guru Gobind Singh in the battle of Bhangani, where two of his sons, one close relative and many more followers died.¹⁵ The Muslim bards have regularly been performing *kirtan* in the Harimandir Sahib till the partition of the country in 1947. People believing in any religion are free to visit the Gurdwara and partake of *Guru ka Langar*. No distinction is ever made at the time of distributing of *Karhāh Parsād* in the congregation.

Especially on the social level the Gurus have almost revolutionized the whole perspective. All distinctions and inequalities made in the name of creed, caste, race, sex have been totally disapproved. The Gurus took a very clear and definite stand on the issue of monasticism and asceticism. Monasticism had almost divorced the religious life from the social life. Similar was the effect of asceticism on the social life. The Gurus totally disregarded monasticism and asceticism in their traditional sense. They related them to the active social life and retained them in spirit. One is to lead a monastic life while living in the society. Such was the doctrine propounded by the Gurus. It is because of this doctrine that no organised order of the monastics exists among the Sikhs. No other religion of the world accords woman the religious and social status which she enjoys in Sikhism. The inequalities based on caste have found no place in Sikhism. Disinterested service of the people have attained the status of the worship of God. The Sikh Gurus, thus have not only brought revival in religious life, they have also reunited the religious life with the social life which had got separated because of innumerable monastic order of the different sects.

14. Gurbachan Singh Talib (trans.), *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1984, Vol. I, p. 42.

15. Gurcharan Singh and V.S. Suri, *Sayyad Badruddin Almaraf Pir Buddhu Shah*, Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, Chandigarh, 1971, pp. 24-27.

During their brief history of five hundred years the Sikhs have emerged as the defenders of the downtrodden and deprived. They have always fought for the rights of have-nots and equality and justice at all levels. Religiously the Sikhs are far more open-minded, tolerant and liberal than any other religious community. In their worship they are far more less formal and superstitious. Socially they are the champions of righteousness, defenders of equality and devoted to the service of people. Economically they are far more enterprising and forward looking among other religious communities. Wherever they have gone, their contribution in all spheres of life is far more greater than their tiny minority. This whole revolution came about because of the touch and inspiration of the Gurus.

The religion of the Sikh Gurus has not only liberated the people from age old superstitions, meaningless ritual forms but has played a most creative and constructive role in bringing the two warring communities of the Hindus and the Muslims close to each other and creating goodwill and mutual trust amongst them. It is not without surprise that at the death of Guru Nanak, both Hindus and muslims claimed him to be their own. Even to this date such claims about the Sikhs are constantly being made. Professor Arnold Toynbee is stating the hard fact when he says :

“Mankind's religious future may be obscure; yet one thing can be foreseen, the living higher religions are going to influence each other more than ever before in these days of increasing communication between all parts of the world and all branches of the human race. In the coming religious debate, the Sikh religion and its scriptures the *Adi Granth*, will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world. This religion is itself a monument of creative spiritual intercourse between two traditional religions whose relations have otherwise not been happy. This is a good augury.¹⁶

We may close the above brief description of Sikhism with the following popular saying about Guru Nanak :

Bābā Nānak Shāh Faqīr

Hindāūn dā Gurū Musalmānā dā Pīr.

(Baba Nanak is the king of mystics. He is the Guru of the Hindus and a *Pīr* (guide) of the Muslims).

16. Arnold Toynbee, 'Foreword', *The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, George Allen Unwin Ltd., London, 1973, pp. 10-11.

Sikh Perspective on the Ideal Family

From time immemorial the institution of the family has remained to be the most central institution for the individual as well as for the society. It is through this institution that the individual and the society have been interacting with each other to realize social goals and the meaning of life. Everyone is born to a family and with very rare exceptions his death rites are also performed by his family. Emphasizing the centrality of the institution in the human life Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi maintains that "family is basically a reconciliation of many different opposites : female and male, life and death, ascendants and descendants, kin and affines (relatives by marriage), biology and culture, freedom and servitude, corporation and individuality."¹ It is not only the most central but also the most widely diffused social institution. Raymond T. Smith reports that, "One of the few widely accepted generalizations of social science asserts that the family is an institution found in all human societies."² In the present times because of increasing cases of disorganization and dissolution doubts are being expressed about the future of the family organization. In this context William J. Goode emphatically holds, "In most of the world the traditional family may be shaken, but the institution will probably enjoy a longer life than any nation now in existence. The family does not seem to be a powerful institution, like the military, the Church, or the state, but it seems to be the most resistant to conquest, or to the efforts people make

1. Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi, "Family", *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, Editor-in-Chief, Mircea Eliade, Vol. 5, New York : Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987, p. 277.
2. Raymond T. Smith, "Family", *The International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Editor, David L. Sills, New York : The Macmillan Company and The Free Press, 1968, Vol. 5, p. 301.

to reshape it. Any specific family may appear to be fragile or unstable but the family system as a whole is tough and resilient."³

Such sentiments and views about the abiding character of the family are being repeatedly expressed by the scholars devoted to the family studies. Helen Bosanquet holds that, "Even if the world could carry on without the family, it could not afford to lose the qualities which would go with it. It is a sombre world as it is, and no shade or tone of feeling that makes for depth and variety and richness can be spared from it. To reject the source of so much warmth and beauty because it sometimes fails, would be like banishing the sun from the sky because it is sometimes covered with clouds."⁴ It is not only in the modern times that the significance of the family is being emphasized. So far as the written records and unbroken living traditions of the different communities take us, we can find the similar views held about the importance of the family. As pointed out at the outset the institution of the family and also religion are found in almost all the existing societies and civilizations. Great philosopher Herbert Spencer has presumed that religion originated through the practice of ancestor worship. Such theories make family as the basis of institutionalized religion itself. The theory may not be correct as such but it definitely brings in focus the significance of the institution of the family.

The modern state is often termed as a super-family. However, before the emergence of nation-state, "in the East loyalty had been defined more in terms of the family, caste, guild or tribal territorial community."⁵ Emphasizing the central role of the family in the traditional Confucian society of China, Kitagawa further explains, "Traditional Chinese society rested upon the principle of 'Family-ism,' which in turn was based on the Confucian concept of filial piety. The nation-state in the modern sense never existed in China until recently. Instead, the state was regarded as a super family—a projection of the patriarchal family in which the relationship among

3. William J. Goode, *The Family*, New Delhi : Prentice-Hall of India Pvt. Ltd., 1994, p. 1.

4. Helen Bosanquet, *The Family*, London : Macmillan, 1915, p. 245.

5. Joseph M. Kitagawa, *Religions of the East*, Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, p. 37.

members of different social strata were governed by Confucian moral principles. The cosmos too was apprehended through the family principle. In short, the family in China has been a metaphysical focus as well as a 'sociological' unit."⁶ Kitagawa goes on to illustrate further that, "at home, ancestral spirits were venerated as though they were alive, and the continuity of the family through the male line is as important to the Chinese as transmigration of souls is to the Hindus."⁷ Concluding his discussion of the importance of family in Confucianism Kitagawa remarks, "Chinese 'Family-ism' implies more than the centrality of the family cult in the lives of the Chinese people; 'Family-ism' determines the values and norms of behaviour of the people in all spheres of life."⁸ The Confucian thought thus is based on the assumption that happiness and prosperity would only prevail if everyone would behave correctly as a family member.

Although uttered in a state of despondency and Confusion the following words of Arjuna, the mighty Indian warrior in the Bhagavadgītā to Lord Kṛṣṇa brings out the prominence of the institution of family in the Hindu scheme of life :

In the ruin of family, its ancient laws are destroyed; and when the laws perish, the whole family yields to lawlessness.⁴⁰

And when lawlessness prevails O Vārsṇeya (Kṛṣṇa) the woman of the family become corrupted and when women are corrupted, confusion of castes arises.⁴¹

And to hell does this confusion bring the family itself as well as those who have destroyed it. For the spirits of their ancestors fall, deprived of their offerings of rice and water.⁴²

By the misdeeds of those who destroy a family and create confusion of *Varnas* the immemorial laws of the caste and family are destroyed.⁴³

And we have heard it said, O Janārdana (Kṛṣṇa) that the men of the families whose laws are destroyed need must live in hell.⁴⁴

It may be noted in passing that the significance of the family in Hindu society can only be understood in the context of caste rules

6. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

9. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, Bombay : Blackie & Son (India) Ltd., 1976, Chapter 1, pp. 92-94.

of different classes. From the above illustrations relating to China and India it becomes clear that in those traditional societies ancestors formed the inseparable part of the family constitution.

The institution of the family, because of its diverse forms, which it has assumed at different periods of history and in different societies, eludes any specific definition. William J. Goode has termed any effort to define family as a matter of more or less.' No single definition of family can do justice to its varied forms. However, it can be maintained with considerable amount of certainty that a married couple with their children form the core of the family package. Scholars who disagree about any specific definition of the family are almost unanimous about its varied and vital functions that it performs in the lives of individual and the society.

In the example cited above, we have noted the religious significance of the institution of the family. Scholars hailing from diverse fields of study have spoken of the biological, social, psychological functions of the family. Regarding these various roles of the family P.H. Prabhu remarks, "As a social institution it has emerged in order to satisfy certain very basic biological, psychological and social needs of man. And ever though it has gone through many changes during the past centuries and several of its original functions like the educational, the economic, the religious, and the recreational have been gradually taken away by other social and state agencies, yet its basic functions which center around the primary bio-psycho-social needs of man have not been affected."¹¹ William J. Goode classifying the varied functions of the family as 'expressive' and 'instrumental' details these as follows: "Although the family is usually thought of as an *expressive* or emotional social unit, it serves as an *instrumental* agency for the larger social structures, and all other institutions and agencies depend upon its contributions...the role behaviour learned within the family becomes the model or prototype for behaviour required in other segments of the society. Inside the family, the content of the *socialization* process in the cultural

10. William J. Goode : 1994, p. 8.

11. Pandharinath H. Prabhu, *Hindu Social Organization*, Bombay : Popular Prakashan, 1979, p. 203.

tradition of the larger society. Families are also themselves *economic* units with respect to production and allocation. With reference to *social control*, each person's total range of behaviour, and how his or her time and energies are budgeted is more easily visible to family members than to the outsiders.¹² Summing up the main functions of the family he says, "Here are some of the contributions of the family to the larger society: reproduction of young, physical maintenance of family members, social placement of the child, socialization and social control."¹³ Elaborating the importance of the family security for social participation Burgess and Locke explain, "Typically, the family is a haven of security to which its members turn for comfort and reassurance from the troubles and trials of the outside world...in adjustment to the outside world. Two hampering conditions to personal adjustment are the lack of family security or overdependence upon it. The function of the family security is to promote rather than interfere with the transition from the stage of dependence to that of independence."¹⁴ Emphasizing the centrality of the affectional bond in the constitution of the family P.H. Prabhu relates that, "the responses in the family are more intimate than elsewhere and are always reciprocal between the husband and the wife, between parents and children."¹⁵ Referring to Ogburn's views he further states, "Ogburn has rightly stressed the affectional bond as a very important one that holds the family together; and the one bond on which the family must continue to rely for its solidarity even if all others fail or are reduced in strength."¹⁶

Having made these general observations about the nature and functions of the family on the bases of the traditional literature and the modern scholarship, we may now turn to examine the Sikh precept and practice of family and its specificity. Before proceeding further to present a brief analysis of the Sikh understanding of the family it may be mentioned in passing that it needs an epic length

12. William J. Goode : 1994, p. 6.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Burgess, E.W. and Lock E.J., *The Family*, pp. 309-10, as quoted by P.H. Prabhu : 1979, p. 210.

15. P.H. Prabhu, 1979, p. 211.

16. *Ibid.*

study to do justice to any analysis of the family in all its complexities and details. The Mahābhārta and the Rāmāyaṇa, the two greatest epics of mankind are the stories of just two royal families of India. Another significant point that may be noted here is that any fruitful analysis of the Sikh understanding of the family can only be attempted in its Indian context, i.e. family conditioned by the Hindu scheme of *Varna-Āshrama* and the Buddhist and Jain families conditioned by their powerful monastic orders. Another noteworthy feature of the Indian family is its predominantly patriarchal character.

Before the advent of Guru Nanak—the founder of Sikhism on the scene the Indian family was badly incapacitated by the complex rules of clan, caste and varnas. The Buddhist and Jain families were greatly deformed by their monastic and ascetic orders. As a result of the separate rules for the monks and laymen the religion came to be divorced from the life of the ordinary layman. The all powerful institution of renunciation, as very aptly pointed out by Louis Dumont,¹⁷ had deeply influenced the Indian life as a whole.

Guru Nanak alongwith the revival and resuscitation of the eternal spirituality encrusted and obliterated through age old meaningless rituals and abstract philosophical systems aimed at ameliorating the lot of common man through restructuring and reformulating the vital social institutions. The Sikh perception of the family derives from the above concerns and innovations of Guru Nanak. The Sikh religion is often called as the religion of the households. The traditional Hindu scheme of *Varna* and *Āshrama* came to be rejected in Sikhism. The Guru explains :

By contemplation of the word by the Master's teaching
Is lifted doubt created by caste, race and clan.¹⁸

Bhai Gurdas, the Sikh savant and the earliest exponent of the message of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* writes about Guru Nanak :

He restored all the four feet of Dharma
And brought the four castes together.¹⁹

17. *Religion/Politics and History in India*, Paris : Mouton Publishers, 1970, pp. 33-61.

18. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Sarang M. 1, p. 1198.

19. Bhai Gurdas, *Varan*, 1:23.

Household's religion in Sikhism is accepted as the best form of religion. Bhai Gurdas in a most exquisite *Kabbit* (a poetic form) expresses his appreciation of household's-religion as follows :

As the sea is greatest among the ponds and rivers.
 And Sumer is most respected among the mountains.
 As the sandalwood tree is costly among the trees,
 Gold is regarded as precious among the metals.
 (As) Swan is most virtuous among the birds,
 Lion is mightiest among the animals.
 (As) Siri Rag is primary among the musical measures,
 Touchstone is precious among the stones.
 (As) the knowledge of the Guru is Supreme amongst
 (Various forms of) knowledge.
 (And) Contemplation on Guru is (most rewarding)
 Amongst forms of contemplation.
 Similarly the religion of the household
 Is supreme among the religions.²⁰

Buddha and Jain religions also sought to abolish the caste system but their emphasis on the distinction between the householder and renouncer failed to achieve the desired results. In Sikhism the institution of renunciation in its traditional sense also came to be disregarded. However, renunciation in spirit is retained and integrated with households religion through the process of interiorization. The Sikh is a man-in-the world, but internally he remains detached amidst attachments :

By power of the Master's Word flee doubt and fear :
 Such a one engaged though in household affairs
 Yet remains unattached.²¹

Bhai Gurdas also explain :

Like the lotus-blossom, unwetted by the
 water, the Sikh lives unattached in this household.
 He lives in the world inspired by noble thoughts
 like the liberated in spirit.²²

20. Bhai Gurdas, *Kabbit*, 376.

21. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Maru M. 4, p. 1070.

22. Bhai Gurdas, *Varan*, 6:15, Trans.by G.S. Mansukhani, *Hymns from Bhai Gurdas's Compositions* (Amritsar : Singh Brothers, 1989). p. 73

Guru Amar Das, the Third Sikh Guru also writes :

By contemplation of holy truth is self illumined :
Thereby even in attachment to pleasure of the world
one unattached remains.
Such is the holy Preceptor's great *miracle*,
That even living with progeny and wife man
the supreme state attains.²³

Further Guru Amar Das appreciates householder's life as one can practice charity in it and serve the needs of the others.

Better than the ascetic pose is the householder's life,
Wherein is practised charity.²⁴

Again the Guru says that the recluse leaves the households life but fails to control his desires for the world. Thus he loses both the worlds :

Leaving progeny as man turns recluse,
his mind still is filled with desire.
While by desire gripped, realization he does not get :
By the Master's word turning desireless, joy he obtains.²⁵

Unlike the traditional Indian religions, the family life in Sikhism came to be recognized as a sanctified life. The institution of family becomes the centre of religious as well as secular affairs and activities. This is a unique contribution of the Sikh Gurus to the Indian religious life. However, the institution of family as perceived in Sikhism is not an end in itself but a means to attain the ultimate goal of human life which is deliverance from the cycle of transmigration. Thus family becomes a holy institution and not just an organization emerged as a result of any social contract. Regarding the constitution of the family the Guru writes :

Mother, father, progeny—all are God's creation.
All by God in relationships are joined.²⁶

The Fifth Guru, Arjan Dev also reasserts :

Mother, father, wife, progeny, relations,
loved friends and brothers—

23. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Dhanasari, M. 3, p. 661.

24. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Wadhans, M. 3, p. 587.

25. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Bilaval, M. 4, p. 835.

26. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Gujari, M. 4, p. 494.

By good fortune acquired in previous births
have met...²⁷

It may be noted from the above verses that the doctrine of transmigration like all other Indian religions, forms inseparable part of the Sikh worldview. Even our family relations are determined by God according to our past doings. But more than advocating any predeterminism the Guru seems to emphasize the holy character and purpose of the institution of the family. The institution of the family is especially more suitable to the Sikh way of life as Sikhism lays equal emphasis on individual as well as on collective liberation. Through its doctrine of liberated-in-life Sikhism enjoins upon the liberated persons to strive for the liberation of others. Guru Arjan says :

On the Name Divine with thy heart meditate ever;
Thereby to your companions and associates liberation you bring.²⁸

The Guru further holds :

Blessed is the birth of the servant of God,
Who the lord, Rewarder of deeds, with progeny has furnished
Alongwith him all assembled groups attain liberation.²⁹

Another important issue associated with institution of the family is the status of woman. Woman throughout the ages has been reviled and discriminated especially in the context of religious life. She has been projected as a pitfall, a stumbling-block and a trap on the pathway to God realization. In majority of the religious traditions she has been denied equal opportunity in the sphere of religious activities. In this regard Sikhism is unique among the religions of the world in bequeathing equal rights to woman in all matters pertaining to religious life. Guru Nanak denounced in the strongest possible words any discriminatory attitude entertained against the mother the of mankind :

Why revile her of whom are born great ones of the earth.³⁰

Bhai Gurdas in his compositions has not only termed woman

27. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Jaitsari, M. 5, p. 700.

28. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Asa, M. 5, p. 394.

29. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Devgandhari, M. 5, p. 532.

30. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Asa, M. 1, p. 473.

as 'better half of man' but also 'door to salvation.' (Bhai Gurdas, Kabbit, 116).

Thus Sikh religion is a unique religion among the history of religions, which accords equal status to woman in religious life.

Before coming to the central issue of family i.e. the relations between the husband and the wife in Sikhism, one more important point about the Sikh perception of the family may be mentioned in brief. On the one hand, family in the hymns of the Sikh Gurus is conceived as an ideal institution for interaction between the individual and the society. So much appreciation has been showered upon family that the whole of the Sikh community is equated to Guru's family. On the other hand, attachment to the family is considered as a very serious obstacle in the way of God-realization. Guru Ram Dass, the fourth Sikh Guru says :

My self : in the world members of one's family,
friends, brothers that you behold
All for self-interest resort to you.³¹

Bhai Gurdas also writes :

Seeing his son, wife and relatives, he should not be
ensnared by attachment, and refrain from fraud and coercion.³²

Bhatt Kirat also expresses the similar views in the following composition :

Full of demerits are we, without a single merit,
Discarding *amrita*, poison we swallow.
Deluded by *Maya*-attachment and doubt
To progeny and wife are we attached.³³

Family as we have noted earlier provides an ideal place for practising social as well as religious duties and obligations. But when the family itself becomes the goal through attachment and greed of temporary worldly comforts, it turns into an obstacle in the pathway to the realization of ultimate goal. It is because of attachment to the family and children that one indulges in corrupt and dishonest practices. Family conceived in this way is a help as well as an obstacle

31. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Gaund, M. 4, p. 860.

32. Bhai Gurdas, *Varan*, 29:11.

33. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Bhatt Kirat, p. 1406.

in the realization of Ideal life. It is in this context that Bhai Gurdas has advised the Sikhs to consider this world as 'midway,' on way to God realization and the stay in the world as a temporary stay, like that of a guest. He exclaims :

I respectfully bow to those who live like
a guest in this temporary world.
Such persons are honoured both in this world
and in God's court.³⁴

Marriage in Sikhism is accomplished in the presence of the holy *Guru Granth Sahib* and considered as a sacred bond between the husband and the wife. In the normal circumstances it is unbreakable. However, every break and crack in family undermines the divine authority and contributes to the prevailing confusion and lawlessness in the society.

In Sikhism relationship between husband and wife based on total love, mutual trust and faithfulness forms the foundation of the ideal family. Union of husband and wife in love is so much eulogised in Sikhism that it has been accepted as prototype of divine union. Depicting the complete identity of husband and wife the third Sikh Guru, Guru Amar Das says :

Not those be the true wedded couples that with
each other consort :
Truly wedded are those that in two frames, are as one light.³⁵

Characterizing the ideal wife the third Guru says :

Saith Nanak : What is mark of the blessed wife ?
Pure her heart, radiant her face, in her Lord absorbed.³⁶

The fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan Dev also maintains :

Saith Nanak servant of God : Blessed is the happily-wedded wife
With whom the spouse his days spends.³⁷

Portraying the characteristics of the degenerated wife Guru Nanak says :

By what signs to know women of cursed matrimony ?

34. Bhai Gurdas, *Varan*, 12:3.

35. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Suhi, M. 3, p. 788.

36. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Suhi, M. 3, p. 785.

37. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Jaitsari, M. 5, p. 704.

Abandoned by the Spouse, in ignominy they wander along :
Soiled their wear, in agony are their nights passed.³⁸

The third Guru Amar Das depicts the degenerated person as a fallen woman, who suffers endlessly, for her own wrong doings :

The egoist is like the woman defiled,
depraved and fallen,
Never will her craving be assuaged—
Ever burning in desire will she wail.
Saith Nanak : One without the Name
Is foul, ugly, by her lord discarded and abandoned.³⁹

Pointing out the distinction between the blessed and the fallen woman Bhai Gurdas says :

The happily wedded wife teaches the values of
the family to the son.
But how a fallen woman can tell her son about his father ?⁴⁰

The degenerated person is repeatedly compared to a harlot. A hymn of the fifth Guru relates :

The woman devoid of *devotion* to the Name Divine,
Even though comely is hideous :
Should a harlot bear a son, still would he be called illegitimate.⁴¹

Restrictions of sexual purity and trust do not apply to the women only. They are equally applicable to both the husband and the wife. Bhai Gurdas says :

One must practise chastity
And consider all other women
Except his wife, as daughters and sisters.⁴²

It may be noted on the basis of the above quotations from the sacred Sikh literature that any breach of trust in the conjugal relations leads to the sure break of the family. The breach of trust not only violates the divine sanction but also destroys the most vital social institution of the family. If the spouses enjoy mutual trust and

38. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Siri, M. 1, p. 72.

39. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Siri, M. 3, p. 89.

40. Bhai Gurdas, *Kabbir*, 164.

41. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Devgandhari, M. 5, p. 528.

42. Bhai Gurdas, *Varan*, 6:8.

love they can lead a happy life with very limited material resources. Guru Arjan says :

Overjoy with the Beloved lasting even for the twinkling of an eye.
Of a night,
Innumerable objects would I sacrifice. (1-Pause)
Sisterfriend : for gold, mansion, silken beds feel
I not attraction.(1)
Pearls, rubies and innumerable joys,
Saith Nanak, without the name are perishable.
With dry *crusts* of food and sleeping on bare ground.
Sisterfriend : in company of the Lord find I joy.(2)⁴³

The relations between the parents and the children as conceived in Sikhism should be guided by the principles of parental affection and filial piety. With any break in the family the children are the worst sufferers. It is the responsibility of the parents to sacrifice their own interests and comforts for the sake of the children. The children in return should never neglect their parents. Where there is loving relation between husband and wife and the children get their due parental affection that according to the Sikh religion is the ideal family. Bhai Gurdas explains :

Just as the wife is devoted to her husband,
and a mother to her son,
In the same way the disciple's love for
the Guru is intimate and blissful.⁴⁴

In the present times the institution of family is passing through a period of deep crisis. Cases of divorce are multiplying and more and more families are disintegrating. In the urban and industrially developed areas the situation is still worse. Growing influence of secularization weakens the traditional religious and cultural hold governing the family. Movement towards equality is adversely affecting the traditional sex roles. The working women are finding it more and more difficult to carry out the responsibilities of working places and the homes. The prevailing spirit of competition has entered into the family life. Growing permissiveness has dealt a death-blow to the traditional basis of the family. As a result of this

43. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Kanara, M. 5, p. 1306.

44. Bhai Gurdas, *Varan*, 27:4.

development children and aged persons are being neglected. The life is becoming more and more insecure and devoid of love and affection. The traditional structure of the society is becoming increasingly instable and fragile. In a closely knit society, such as in India, every family that breaks, affects at least ten more families. The Indian family system is relatively stable but it is not secure for all times to come. The growing influence of modernity and ever increasing moral laxity is threatening the traditional fiber of the Indian family life.

The present crisis of family is not confined to this or that community. It is threatening to engulf the entire social life. The Sikh religion or any other religion, does not have any special solution to check the erosion, that the other communities lack. The solution is there with all the religions in their religious teachings and family conventions. But presently we are moving towards some other direction. Personally, I am optimistic and as the Jewish, perception of religious history teaches us, 'we shall be more wise after suffering more.' And this is true about the institution of the family also.

===== CHAPTER-7 =====

Rudolf Otto's Analysis of Numinous¹ and Sikhism

Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige* (*The Idea of the Holy*; more appropriately 'The Holy'²) is an epoch making study in the field of religion. The real significance and contribution of this volume can be understood and appreciated in the context of the theological and philosophical tendencies and controversies prevalent in the nineteenth century, but still it provides many profound insights into the nature of the religious experience which are as relevant to our times as they were in the beginning of the century.³ Instead of focusing on the ideas of God and religion the author attempts to analyse the structure of the religious experience,⁴ which is central to the understanding of religion. All other issues are inextricably entangled with this central issues. The area where this analysis is made is

1. Rudolf Otto, 'Religion 'as Numinal Experience' in *Ways of Understanding Religion*, Ed. by Walter H. Crapps (New York : The Macmillan Company, 1972) originally from Rudolf Otto's *Religious Essays* translated by Brian Lunn (London : Oxford University Press, 1931) pp. 68-71, for Otto's views of *sensus numinus*.
2. After all, the German title of Otto's book is *Das Heilige* which means 'the Holy'. Otto's purpose is distorted by the title chosen by the English translator, namely *The Idea of the Holy*. Otto is not so much interested in the concept of holiness as in the reality of the Holy, that is of God," *An Introduction of the Philosophy of Religion* (New York : McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974), p. 89; Mircea Eliade also has translated *Das Heilige* as *The Sacred*, *The Sacred and The Profane : The Nature of Religion* (Translated by Williard R. Trask) (New York : Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959), p. 8.
3. The extraordinary interest aroused all over the world by Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige* (*The Sacred*), published in 1917, still persists. Its success was certainly due to the author's new and original point of view." *Ibid*.
4. *Ibid*., "Instead of studying the *Ideas of God and Religion*, Otto undertook to analyse the modalities of *the religious experience*."

primarily Christianity, and the Protestant, Lutheran Pietistic background of the author, which is evident from the most of the quotations and categories used in the analysis and the substantial portion of the book devoted to it, however, the analysis promises to be universally applicable. Such a claim is not altogether unjustified, for the author with his two-fold training as a systematic theologian and as an historian of religion was fully equipped to make such an analysis. Although the analysis is made primarily in terms of the Christian experience, yet it is in the context of the Indian religions in particular and all the other religions of the world in general.⁵ It is only because of its claim to be universally applicable that we would attempt to relate briefly this analysis to the Sikh experience of the encounter with the Divine (*numen*).

Also mention may be made of the descriptive method of Otto. In our times Otto is regarded as one of the most successful phenomenologists of religion.⁶ In his attempt to describe and analyse the structure of the 'holy' he very efficiently has employed some of the techniques of the phenomenological method.⁷ But it is also true

5. "In this (1910) and in later visits to the Near East and India (1925, 1924-8) he not only deepened an already profound study of the great religions of the East but was able to realize at first hand what in the religious experience which they enshrine is specific and unique and what on the other hand is common to all genuine religions, however diversely expressed in sacred writings, rituals or art... From the time of this first Eastern Journey Christianity must have stood for Otto against a background not so much of West-European Science as of the great world-religions of which he held it to be the culmination." Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Translated by John W. Harvey) Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1980), Translator's Preface p. x. My emphasis that in the context of the Indian religions in particular is justified by the fact that more than half of his total fifteen books are devoted to the study and translation of Indian Religions and sacred writings. For details see Joachim Wach, *Types of Religious Experience Christian and Non-Christian* (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press) pp. 215-16 and S.P. Dubey, *Rudolf Otto and Hinduism* (Varanasi : Bhartiya Vidya Prakashan, 1969) p. 4.
6. Diamond, Malcolm L., *op.cit.*, Chapter 5, especially pp. 78-84.
7. "He brought to the interpretation of the religious practices and beliefs of many lands an imaginative sympathy that was receptive without ceasing to be critical." *The Idea of the Holy*, Translator's preface p. x; Otto himself writes, "Let us consider the deepest and most fundamental element in all strong and sincerely felt religious emotions. Faith unto salvation, trust, love—all these are there. But over and above these, is an element which may also on occasions, quite apart from them profoundly affect us and occupy the mind with a well nigh bewildering strength. Let us follow it up"

that Otto means different things to different people, in different branches of learning. He was undoubtedly the most leading Protestant theologian for the first three decades of our century. Also he was a great historian of religions and philosopher of religion. The psychologists in the field of religion place great reliance on his analysis of the religious feelings. In addition to the above, every scholar who has attempted to write anything about his scholarly contribution has also taken into consideration the factor of his unique personality. Joachim Wach has called him a great mystic and a saint.⁸

We have noted above that *The Idea of the Holy* is primarily devoted to the analysis and understanding of the religious experience. To Otto, the clue to the essential nature of the religious experience is not to be found in that which is common with other types of human experiences but in that which is unique in it.⁹ Passing over the rational side, he concentrates on the unique non-rational side of the religious experience which need not necessarily be expressed in the terms of ideas and concepts.¹⁰ His inquiry is set against the overstressing of the rationalistic and moralistic elements in the religious experience. To the whole realm of meanings enshrined in the religious experience, Otto gives the name the 'holy'.

with every effort of sympathy and imaginative intuition wherever it is to be found, in the lives of those around us, in sudden, strong ebullitions of personal piety and the frames of mind such ebullitions evince, in the fixed and ordered solemnities of rites and liturgies, and again in the atmosphere that clings to old religious monuments and buildings, to temples and to churches." *Ibid.*, p. 12.

8. "Neither before nor since my meeting Otto have I known a person who impressed one more genuinely a true mystic." Joachim Wach, *op.cit.*, p. 211.

9. "It is always in terms of concepts and ideas that the subject is pursued, 'natural' one's, moreover, such as have a place in the general sphere of man's ideational life, and are not specifically 'religious'. And then with a resolution and cunning which one can hardly help admiring, men shut their eyes to that which is quite unique in the religious experience, even in its most primitive manifestations. But it is rather a matter for astonishment than for admiration! For if there be any single domain of human experience that presents us with something unmistakably specific and unique, peculiar to itself, assuredly it is that of the religious life." Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 4.

10. "In this book I have ventured to write of that which may be called 'non-rational' or 'supra-rational' in the depths of the divine nature and "This book, recognizing the profound import of the non-rational for meta-physics, makes a serious attempt to analyse all the more exactly the *feeling* which remains where the concept fails and to introduce a terminology which is not any the more loose or indeterminate for having necessarily to make use of symbols." *Ibid.*, foreword, p. xxi.

The holy for him is a unique category of interpretation and valuation in the sphere of religion.¹¹ The holy, says Otto, has come to be employed in an entirely derivative sense i.e. 'completely good' as an absolute moral attribute denoting the consummation of moral goodness.¹² Otto continues that, "this common usage of the term is inaccurate. It is true that all this moral significance is contained in the word 'holy', but it includes in addition—as even we cannot but feel—a clear overplus of meaning, and this it is now our task to isolate. Nor is this merely a later or acquired meaning; rather, 'holy' or at least the equivalent words in Latin and Greek, in Semitic and other ancient languages denoted first and foremost only this overplus. If the ethical element was present at all, at any rate it was not original and never constituted the whole meaning of the word."¹³ Otto focuses on this overplus meaning of the 'holy' which is holy minus its ethical and also minus its rational meaning. To this overplus category of meanings he gives the new name—'numinous' which he coined from the Latin *numen* (meaning god). He says, "I shall speak, then, of a unique 'numinous' category of value and of a definitely 'numinous' state of mind, which is always found wherever the category is applied. This mental state is perfectly *sui generis* and irreducible to any other's and therefore, like every absolutely primary and elementary datum, while it admits of being discussed, it cannot be strictly defined."¹⁴ The 'numinous' always evades conceptual apprehension but it can be evoked and awakened in the mind with the help of analogy and contrast with other known and felt experiences in the region of mind. 'Ideogram'¹⁵ and not concept is more helpful in this realm of apprehension. It is in terms of the 'numinous' that Otto attempts to interpret the whole religious phenomenon. Religion for Otto is numinal experience.¹⁶

Otto was attracted to focus on this unique numinous feeling

11. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*

15. An 'Ideogram' like myth is an illustrative and symbolic substitute for concepts. Otto employs the ideogram while speaking of the religious feelings which are incommensurable with other types of human feelings.

16. Rudolf Otto, 'Religion as Numinal Experience,' *Ways of Understanding Religion*, p. 16.

by at least two of his predecessors—Schleiermacher for his discovery of *sensus numinus* on the basis of which he arrived at his definition of religion as ‘feeling of absolute dependence’¹⁷ and Fries for his notion of *ahnung*.¹⁸ However, Otto moved far beyond his predecessors in exploring more specifically the non-rational dimension of the holy for which he coined his own term—numinous.

Otto begins his discussion by directing attention to that element or moment which is unique in the religious experience. This unique element, Otto maintains, is distinct from the ethical or moral element.¹⁹ Again religious feelings such as ‘gratitude, trust, love, reliance, humble submission and dedication’ are the weaker forms of the same unique element.²⁰ Otto appreciates Schleiermacher’s effort to isolate this unique element in the religious experience in his definition of religion as ‘feeling of absolute dependence’; but this too he says ‘is no more than a very close analogy’.²¹ In order to illustrate further the unique character of the religious feelings, Otto cites the example of Abraham in the presence of *numen* (God): ‘Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.’²² And to this unique religious feeling which is explicit in the above quote Otto proposes to call—‘creature consciousness’ or ‘creature feeling’.²³ Thus Otto replaces Schleiermacher’s ‘feeling of absolute dependence’ by ‘creature feeling’. He describes it as follows: “It is the emotion of a creature,

17. Schleiermacher not only rediscovered the *sensus numinus* in a vague and general way but he opened for his age a new door to old and forgotten ideas: to divine marvel instead of supernaturalistic miracle, to a new understanding and valuation of biblical history as divine revelation”. *Ibid.*, p. 24; and “Schleiermacher has the credit of isolating a very important element in such an experience. This is the feeling of dependence.” Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 9.

18. “*Ahnung* (obsolete form of *Ahmung*, literally, “presentiment” or “intuition”) a yearning that yields the feeling of truth, opened up to him the way of dealing with religious phenomena, sensitively and appropriately. These “feelings of truth” Otto sought to schematize in his *The Idea of the Holy*”. “Rudolf Otto” in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 13, p. 770a.

19. “To be *rapt* in worship in one thing; to be morally *uplifted* by the contemplation of a good deed is another...” Otto, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. Cf. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures".²⁴ Otto as we have seen already has distinguished this feeling from the moral feeling. Here he emphasizes that it is not a *conceptual* explanation of the matter. He clearly isolates his description of the creature feeling from moral and rational formulations. He further clarifies that the creature feeling is not just subjective feeling without any objective reference. "Rather, the 'creature-feeling' is itself a first subjective concomitant and effect of another feeling element, which casts it like a shadow, but which in itself indubitably has immediate and primary reference to an object outside the self."²⁵ To this object outside the self, Otto calls 'the numinous'. The numinous thus is not purely subjective; it clearly has an objective reference. Now, if the numinous eludes conceptual analysis how can we discuss and describe it? Otto maintains, "that the nature of the numinous can only be suggested by means of the special way in which it is reflected in the minds in terms of feeling...by adducing feelings akin to them for the purpose of analogy or contrast, and by the use of metaphor and symbolic expression..."²⁶ It may be noted here that in his attempt to describe and discuss the incommensurably and inexpressible ineffable numinous, Otto resorts to analogical, metaphorical and symbolic methods of description by focusing on the feelings. To 'the deepest and most fundamental element in all strong and sincerely felt religious emotions' he gives the name *mysterium tremendum*.²⁷ He describes this element as :

"The feeling of it may at times come sweeping like a gentle tide pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship. It may pass over into a more set and lasting attitude of the soul, continuing, as it were, thrillingly vibrant and resonant, until at last it dies away and the soul resumes its 'profane', non-religious mood of everyday experience. It may burst in sudden eruption up from the depths of the soul with spasms and convulsions, or lead to the strangest excitements,

24. *Ibid.*, p. 10

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

27. *Ibid.*

to intoxicated frenzy, to transport, and to ecstasy. It has its wild and demonic forms and can sink to an almost grisly horror and shuddering. It has its crude, *barbaric* antecedents and early manifestations, and again it may be developed into something beautiful and pure and glorious. It may become the hushed, trembling, and speechless humility of the creature—in the presence of—whom or what? In the presence of that which is *mystery* inexpressible and above all creatures.”²⁸

Conceptually this ‘mystery’ or the ‘*mysterium*’ can be understood negatively as something hidden, esoteric, extraordinary, unfamiliar, etc. But in the feeling content it reveals something absolutely and intensely positive. To the *mysterium* or to use the adjective ‘mysterius’ Otto gives the name ‘wholly other’ to which the immediate feeling response is that of blank wonder and astonishment.²⁹ He further explains it, “The truly ‘mysterious’ object is beyond our apprehension and comprehension, not only because our knowledge has certain irremovable limits, but because in it we come upon something inherently ‘wholly other’, whose kind and character are incommensurable with our own, and before which we therefore recoil in a wonder that strikes us chill and numb.”³⁰ The ‘*mysterium*’ for Otto represents the form of the numinous experience. The qualitative content of the numinous experience can only be experienced in feelings and it presents itself under two different aspects i.e. ‘*tremendum*’ and ‘*fascinans*’.

The ‘*tremendum*’ aspect of the ‘*mysterium*’ or the ‘wholly other’ finds expression in three elements viz. ‘awefulness’, ‘overpoweringness’ (*majestas*) and ‘energy’ or ‘urgency’. The element of awefulness has a very close analogy in the emotion of fear. But it is not fear proper in the natural sense of the term. The analogy of fear can be employed only ‘to denote a quite specific kind of emotional response wholly distinct from that of being afraid...’³¹ Otto quotes Job IX.34; XIII.21 (‘let not his fear terrify me’, ‘let not thy dread make me afraid’). To illustrate this specific type of feeling, he further says,

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 13

"Here we have a terror fraught with an inward shuddering such as not even the most menacing and overpowering created thing can instill. It has something spectral in it."³²

The second element of 'overpoweringness' (*majestas*) has a reference to the feeling of being overwhelmed in the presence of the greatest that renders opposition useless. Otto maintains that, "It is especially in relation to the element of majesty or absolute overpoweringness that the creature consciousness,... comes upon the scene, as a sort of shadow or subjective reflection of it. Thus in contrast to 'the overpowering' of which we are conscious as an object over against the self, there is the feeling of one's own submergence, of being but 'dust and ashes and nothingness.'"³³

The third element of 'energy' or urgency' according to Otto, "is particularly vividly perceptible in the 'wrath', and it everywhere clothes itself in symbolical expressions—vitality, passion, emotional temper, will, force, movement, excitement, activity, impetus."³⁴ This element of energy of the *numen* according to Otto puts it in fiercest opposition to the 'philosophic' God of mere rational speculation, who can be put into a definition."³⁵

The numinous, not only reveals as *tremendum* but also at the same time as uniquely attractive and fascinating. "These two qualities", says Otto, "the daunting and fascinating now combine in a strange harmony of contrasts, and the resultant dual character of the numinous consciousness, to which the entire religious development bears witness, at any rate from the level of the 'demonic dread' onwards, is at once the strongest and most noteworthy phenomenon in the whole history of religion."³⁶

The above mentioned two polar qualities of daunting and fascinating sums up man's encounter with the *numen*. "From the former comes the sense of the uncanny, of divine wrath and judgement' from the latter, the reassuring and heightening experiences of grace and divine love."³⁷ This harmonious nature of the numinous

32. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

37. *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *op.cit.*

combining polar moments of awe and attraction has been compared by Otto with the experience of 'sublime' in aesthetic.

Otto's contribution to the study of religion consists in isolating the unique element or moment in the religious experience and determining its content and specific characteristics by attending to uniquely religious feelings.

Now, finally we may turn to analyse whether or not Otto's analysis of the numinous can be related to the case of the experience of *numen* in Sikhism. It has already been noticed that Otto's analysis of religious experience promises to be generic, hence universally applicable. Of all the religions of the world, beyond Christianity, Otto was particularly attracted by Indian religions. More than half of his works are devoted to the study of medieval theistic religions of India. It would not be an unjustified claim if we say that Otto's analysis of religious experience was much indebted to his interest and insight into the Indian religions. His categories of analysis of the numinous experience therefore are not foreign to Indian religions and also to Sikhism.

It may be mentioned here that we cannot take up the whole perspective of the encounter with *numen* in Sikhism. It would be far beyond the limited scope of our present attempt. The Sikh religious experience is enshrined in the devotional hymns which form the corpus of the sacred Sikh writings. All that we can do here, is to quote a few hymns, illustrative of the categories used in the analysis of numinous by Otto. It may also be stated in the beginning that in the devotional hymns we cannot expect the categories to be as clearly isolated as they are found in a theoretical discussion.

Wholly other :

Marks and symbols, caste and class,
 Or lineage God hath none;
 His form and hue, shape and garb
 Cannot be described by anyone;
 Immovable is His Being.
 Self-Luminous, He shines in His splendour;
 Limitless is His power.
 He is the King of Kings, the lordly Indra
 Of countless Indras; the Supreme Sovereign

Of the three worlds of gods, men and demons;
Nay, even the grass blades of the woodland
Say : "He is Infinite, He is Infinite."
O Lord, who can count Thy names ?
Thy Names relating Thy deeds I will state,
Through Thy wisdom and grace."³⁸

Creature feeling :

"Great is my God, Unknowable, Unreachable, the Primal
He, Immaculate, the Absolute.
Of His State I cannot tell; He of Infinite Glory, my God, is
Unfathomable and Infinite.
Yea, Govind is Infinite, Unfathomable, Transcendent, Knowing
Himself His Self.
What can one say of these creaturely beings ?
Can ever they utter and describe Thee ?"³⁹

Religious fear :

"The Lord's Fear is overpowering and hard to bear
But the mind's instruction is far lighter and of lighter weight in its
prattle.
But he, who suffers the weight (of the Lord's Fear) over his head,
On Him is the Lord's Grace and he dwells on the (instruction of)
the Guru.
Without (the Lord's) Fear, not one has crossed (the sea of Existence)
(For), with this Fear is decked the (Lord's) Love.
The fire of Fear that is within us burns brighter the more we fear the
Lord,
We feed this Fire with (the Love of) the Word.
Without the Lord's Fear, all that one casts is false;
False is the Mould, and false the beating (on the anvil).

38. *Chakra chihan ar(u) baran jā ar(u) pāt nahin jeh.*
Rūp rang ar(u) rekh bhekh koū kaih na sakat(i) kih.
Achal mūrat(i) anbhav prakās amitoj kahijjai.
Kot(i) indra indran(i) sāhe sāhān(i) ganijjai.
Tribhavan mahim sur nar asur net net ban trin kahat.
tav sarav nām kathe kavan karam nām barnat sumat. (Dasam Granth, p. 1)
39. *Vadā merā govind(u) agam agochar(u) ād(i) niranjan(u) nirañkār jō.*
Tā kī gat(i) kahī nā jāi amit(i) vadiāi merā govind alakh apār(u) jō.
Govind alakh apār(u) apranpar(u) āp(u) āpnā jānai.
kiā eh jāit vichāre kahīah(i) jo tudh(u) ākh(i) vakhānai. (Guru Granth, p. 448)

The play of intellect leads us to (sensual) pleasures:
 Were we a thousand times cleverer, the fire of Fear will mould us not
 (to true purpose).

Nanak : the self-willed speak (in vain) like the wind,
 And, False is their word, for it is nothing but sound."⁴⁰

Fascinans :

Great is Thy Glory, for Great is Thy Name.
 Great is Thy Glory, for Thy Justice is upon Thy Truth
 Great is Thy Glory, for Eternal is Thy Seat.
 Great is Thy Glory, for Thou Knowest our speech.
 Great is Thy Glory, for Thou Divinest our inmost thoughts.
 Great is Thy Glory, for Thou Givest unasked.
 Great is Thy Glory, for thou are All-in-all.
 Nanak : All Thy Doings one cannot tell;
 For what is and will be, is all in Thy will.⁴¹

and

Wonderful (*vismād*) is Sound, Wonderful is Wisdome.
 Wonderful is life, Wonderful its distinctions.
 Wonderful is form, Wonderful is colour.
 Wonderful are the creatures who wander about naked.
 Wonderful is air, Wonderful is water.
 Wonderful the fire that works many wonders.
 Wonderful is the earth, Wonderful the species,
 Wonderful the tastes that lure away life.
 Wonderful the Union, Wonderful the Experience.
 Wonderful the Praise, Wonderful the Eulogy,
 Wonderful the Path, Wonderful the straying-away
 Wonderful the Nearness, Wonderful the Yond.

40. *Bhau much(u) bhārā vaḍā tol(u). Man mat(i) haulī bole bol(u).*
Sir(i) dhar(i) chaliai sahiai bhār(u). Nadrī karmī gur bīchār(u).
Bhai bin(u) koī nā laṅghas(i) pār(i). Bhai bhau rākhīā bhāe savār(i). Rahāu.
Bhai tan(i) agan(i) bhakhai bhāi nāl(i). Bhai bhau gharīai sabad(i) savār(i).
Bhai bin(u) ghāṛat kach(u) nikach(u). Andhā sachā andhī saṭ.2.
Budhī bājī upjai chau. Sahas siāṇap pavai na tāu.
Nānak manmukh(i) bolan(u) vāu. Andhā akhar(u) vāu duāu.3.

(Guru Granth, p. 151)

41. *Vaḍī vaḍiāi jā vaḍā nāu. Vaḍī vaḍiāi jā sach niāu.*
Vaḍī vaḍiāi jā nihchal thāu. Vaḍī vaḍiāi jāṇai ālāu.
Vaḍī vaḍiāi bujhai sabh(i) bhāu. Vaḍī vaḍiāi jā puchh(i) na dār(i).
Vaḍī vaḍiāi jā āpe āp(i). Nānak kār na kathani jāe.
Kītā kahanā sarab rajāe.

(Guru Granth, p. 463)

Wonderful the Presence one seeth in the Present.
O wonder-struck am I to see wonder upon wonder.
But it is through Perfect Destiny that one knows its answer.⁴²

Harmony of Contrasts

Hail to Thee O Destroyer of all
Hail to Thee O Creator of all
Hail to Thee O Death of all
Hail to Thee O Sustainer of all.⁴³
and
Salutation to the Unknown Darkness.⁴⁴
Salutation to the Light of Lights;
and
Adoration to the causer of turmoil
Adoration to the Embodiment of Peace.⁴⁵

Looking at the above quotations it does not need much effort to find out that over and above the realm of all other meanings, the numinous meaning is primary here. God is loving and graceful, glorious and wonderful but at the same time fearful and overpowering. These polar qualities have uniquely been synthesized in the nature of the numinous, by calling Him destroyer and creator, Unknown Darkness and Light of lights, Causer of turmoil and Embodiment of peace etc. In brief we may say that Otto's analysis of the numinous can easily be applied to the Sikh case and it can be helpful in understanding the nature and content of the religious experience in Sikhism.

42. *Vismād nād vismād(u) ved. Vismād(u) jīa vismād(u) bhed.*
Vismād(u) rūp vismād(u) rang. Vismād(u) nāge phireh(i) janī.
Vismād(u) paun(u) vismād(u) pānī. Vismād(u) sād(i) lageh parānī.
Vismād(i) sanjog(u) vismād(u) vijog(u). Vismād(u) bhukh vismād(u) bhog(u).
Vismād(u) siphat(i) vismād(u) sālāh. Vismād(u) ujhar vismād(u) rāh.
Vismād(u) nerai vismād(u) dūr(i). Vismād(u) dekhai hājūr(i) hajūr(i).
Vekh(i) vidān(i) rahiā vismād(u). Nānak bujhan(u) pūre bhāg(i).3.

(Guru Granth, pp. 463-64)

43. *Namo sarab khāpe. Namō sarab thāpe.*

Namo sarab kāle. Namō sarab pāle.

(Dasam Granth, p. 2)

44. *Namo andhkāre namo tej teje.*

(Dasam Granth, p. 10)

45. *Namo kalah kartā namo sānt rūpe.*

(Dasam Granth, p. 10)

Sevā in Sikhism— An Inquiry into its Meaning

The Sikh way of life may be summarized in two terms—*sevā* (service) and *simran* (Continuous remembrance of God). The *simran* also in its final analysis has been identified with *sevā* 'service of God'.¹ As a result of this, *sevā* is the only path through which the final goal of life is to be achieved. The central place of *sevā* in Sikhism may be known from the fact that final goal set for the seeker is that of becoming an ideal servant (*sevak*) of God. The *sevā* thus, is not only the path to the attainment of some higher goal but an end in itself. The highest attainment conceived in Sikhism consists in the perfection of *sevā*. Ascent to the spiritual goal means becoming more and more devoted *sevak*.

Before turning to the detailed inquiry into the meaning of *sevā* it seems pertinent to identify some of the reasons responsible for this characteristic Sikh emphasis in the path of *sevā*.

Reality of the Phenomenal World

First, in Guru Nanak's thought the reality of the phenomenal world is not denigrated as in the case of the dominant strain of Indian thought (*advaita*) where it is *conceived as unreal (mythyā)*. This view of the phenomenal world as false has often given rise to renunciation of such a world. In order to lead contemplative life this world is renounced; for any sort of involvement in it leads more and more away from the Reality. For Guru Nanak, the creation of the True One cannot be altogether untrue and devoid of reality, once the underlying purpose of it had been experienced. To him the world

1. *Andin(u) sāhib(u) sevīai anṭ chhaḍāe soe.*

(Dhanasari M. 1, p. 660)

is an expression of God and through its creation the Creator reveals itself. In *Vār Āsā* the Guru says, that "the creation is the dwelling place of the True One, He resides in it."² Again the Guru says that, "this body is the temple of God where He reveals through the divine knowledge. The self-willed knows not the Truth and believes that the human body cannot be the temple of God."³ This view of the creation insists upon an attitude of active participation in social life in place of withdrawing from it. In Sikhism, the attitude of renunciation and withdrawal from active life has been given a creative orientation. The Sikh Gurus have preached the doctrine of renunciation in action. The path of *sevā* is the most suited expression of this attitude. The seeker here is not required to withdraw from the world but to withdraw his senses from the lures of the *māyā* (worldly comforts). In this scheme of life God-oriented activity has been given preference over any inactivity.

Meaning of *Jīvanmukta*

The Sikh doctrine of liberation may be adduced as the second reason which led to an emphasis on the practice of *sevā* in Sikhism. Although the liberation of man is the result of his individual efforts, it is not completely divorced from collective efforts. The seeker is to attain his release through the service of the congregation (*sangat*). In his final release the responsibility of liberating his fellow-beings has also been enjoined upon him. The person liberated in life (*jīvanmukta*) does not withdraw from the life of active social service, indeed he continues his struggle for the liberation of others. More than his "the liberated person can return to the world in order to seek the release of those (still) in bondage."⁴ This idea bears an interesting resemblance to the *Mahāyāna* ideal of *Bodhisattva*, that is, one who postpones his own liberation in the interest of liberating all beings. Such an ideal of universal liberation necessarily calls upon the disciple to lead an active life of service.

2. *Eh(u) jag(u) sachai kī hai koṭharī sachē kā vich(i) vās(u)*. (Salok M. 2, p. 463)

3. *Har(i) māṇdar(u) eh(u) sarīr(u) hai giān(i) ratan(i) pargat(u) hoe*.

(Prabhati M. 3, p. 1346)

4. *Janam maraṇ duh-bū maih nāhī jan parupkārī āe*.

Jīa dān(u) de bhagṭī lāin(i) Har(i) sio lāin milāe.

(Suhi M. 5, p. 749)

Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of the Man

The third point concerns the theme of the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of the man which has been constantly reiterated in the *gurbāṇī*. The unity of God and equality of mankind is basic to the teachings of the Gurus and is an assumption which calls for the service of one's fellow beings because it is through this service that the Fatherhood of God is to be realized.

Ritualistic Actions Replaced by *Sevā*

Lastly, in the Guru's scheme of salvation the ritualistic actions have been superseded by the altruistic righteous actions performed in accordance with the Will of God (*hukam*). It has been emphatically maintained that such service is the best worship which can be offered to God.⁵

These then are some of the reasons that have led to so much emphasis being placed on the practices of *sevā* in Sikhism. The term *sevā* literally means 'service' but in Guru's usage it has a much wider connotation. It does not simply imply an action done to others without the hope of any reward, but also embraces the meanings of contemplation on Guru's word⁶ and the 'continuous remembrance of God'.⁷ The devotional aspect of the *sevā* has been given much more importance in *gurbāṇī* and constitute the fundamental meaning of the term. Because of this, any interpretation of the idea of *sevā* in terms of morality without reference to its primary meaning, i.e. love of God, cannot do full justice to it. Thus, when we speak of *sevā* in Sikhism we take the term to mean both 'devotion to God' and 'service of the fellow-beings'. In *gurbāṇī* certain requisites of ideal type of *sevā* have also been mentioned. A glance at these requisites shall further clarify our understanding of the meaning of *sevā*. The *sevā* as had been laid down by the Guru should be "free from the desire of any reward".⁸ A self-centred or egoistic

5. (a) Sevak sevaih karam(i) chāṛāo (Āsā M. 1, p. 465)

(b) Karṇī kirat(i) karam samānai. (Gauṛī M. 1, p. 223)

6. Gur ki sevā sabad(u) vichār(u). (Gauṛī M. 1, p. 223)

7. Sevak ki orak(i) nibahī prīt(i).

Jivat sāhib(u) sevio apnā chalte rakhio chīt(i). (Mārū M. 5, p. 1000)

8. Sevā karat hoc nihkāmi. Tis kau hot prāpat(i) suāmī. (Gauṛī M. 5, p. 286)

man cannot perform any service, for the service demands self-sacrifice. It can only be performed with a heart free from *haumai* (self-centredness).⁹ A further requisite is complete surrender to the Will of God.¹⁰ It should also be voluntary and self-imposed, for service performed under any compulsion cannot be of any merit.¹¹ Any service is not perfect unless performed with a heart full of devotion for the Guru.¹²

Unrequited Sevā

The *sevā* understood thus, is the service for humanity without expectation of any reward, it is devotion to God. The service of humanity may be of any kind which is done with an altruistic motive and without the sense of ego. The *sevā* enjoined upon the newly initiated disciple may be in the form of *upkeeping* of the *gurdwārā*, serving the congregation with water, fanning them, service in the common-kitchen and dusting the footwear of the congregation.¹³ Again providing food to the needy, giving rest to their bodies and reading out the scripture for their solace are some of the other types of *seva* that the Guru has laid down for the Sikhs.

It may be noticed that different forms of *sevā* recommended by the Guru are those which were considered as low by his contemporaries. The Guru it seems has purposely done it for this kind of service helps man to overcome his false ego.

Remembrance of God is Service to Humanity

The *sevā* of God consists in contemplating on the attributes of God and continuously remembering Him (*nām simran*). Only a person who performs the *sevā* of God with devotion and love can serve humanity. Every type of service is ultimately the service of God, for God is the sole Creator of everything. The service of mankind

9. *Vich(i) haumai sevā thāe na pāe.*

(Mārū M. 4, p. 1071)

10. *Aisī sevak(u) sevā karai. Jis kā jīo tis(u) āgai dharai.*

Sāhib bhāvai so parvān(u). So sevak(u) dargah pāvai mān(u).

(Dhanāsri M. 1, p. 661)

11. *Badhā chafī jo bhare nā gun(u) nā upkār(u).*

(M. 1, p. 787)

12. *Satigur kī sevā safal(u) hai je ko kare chit(u) lāe.*

(Salok M. 3, p. 644)

13. *Sikh Rahit Maryada* Amritsar, Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.

is the concrete expression of devotee's love for God. While engaged in any type of service, the devotee is ultimately serving God. The Guru has also explicitly maintained that the only true service is the service of God which brings manifold reward.¹⁴

Ethico-spiritual Transformation

The question may now be asked as to what role does *sevā* play in the ethico-spiritual transformation of the man ?

On the ethical place the practice of *sevā* helps man to realize the ideal of universal brotherhood and that equality, necessity of which the Guru has repeatedly stressed. On the spiritual plane the practice of *sevā* enables the devotee to achieve the final goal of liberation. *Haumai* (ego, self-centredness) constitute the bondage of man. It is only through the performance of *sevā* that the bondage of *haumai* is broken and man realizes his final goal.¹⁵

Service then not only helps the person who practises it but also enables him to help others in seeking their release.¹⁶ In this way its aim is not only the individual's liberation but the liberation of all.

It is because of these practical implications of the *sevā* that the Guru has explicitly stated that he who does not serve in the world shall not secure a place in the abode of God.¹⁷

14. *Har(i) kī tum sevā karoh dūjī sevā karoh na koe jī.*

Har(i) kī sevā te manoh chindīā phal(u) pāīai dūjī sevā janam(u) birthā jāe jī.

(Gujri M. 3, p. 490)

15. *Satigur kī sevā safal(u) hai je ko kare chit(u) lāe.*

Man(i) chindīā phal(u) pāvnā haumai vichoh jāe.

Bāndhan torai mukat(i) hoe sache rahai samāe.

(Salok M. 3, p. 644)

16. *Āp(i) mukat(u) saṅgī tare kul kutān(u) udhāre.*

Safal sevā gurdev kī nirmal darbāre.

(Bilāwal M. 5, p. 814)

17. *Vich(i) duniā sev kamāīai. Tā dargah baisan(u) pāīai.*

(Sri M. 1, p. 26)

The Idea of *Jīvanmukta* in Sikhism

Almost all the religions of the world express their concern for the predicament of man. Man viewed from the religious perspective is a sinner and alienated (Judeo-Christian view) or ignorant, estranged and illusioned (Indian view). His existence in the world is characterised as 'broken' for he has lost his primordial position and he is ignorant of his true nature, his primordial position being his place in Heaven and his true nature being his divine nature or identity with God. As a result of his 'fall' or 'ignorance' he is living a life of imperfection and suffering. This imperfection and suffering can be removed by re-establishing the lost relationship, by attaining the glory of Heaven and by realizing the true nature of the self i.e. becoming one with God. Man, therefore, stands desperately in need of reunion or enlightenment.

Attainment of reunion with God or liberation from bondage has been accepted as the highest aim (*summum bonum*) of life. So far as this goal is concerned, all the religions seem to be in agreement. However, in their description of the nature of this goal they have considerable differences. Each religion has formulated its idea of liberation in accordance with its own *Weltanschauung*. As a result of the difference in their world views we find different ideas of liberation in different religions.

In Indian religions there is a marked difference between the idea of *videhamukti* (liberation after the dissolution of the body) and *jīvanmukti* (liberation while still in embodied existence). Only those religious systems subscribe to the former view which consider that the physical body is one of the causes of bondage. According to them, true liberation means liberation from the body also. In Sikhism it is not the body but the consciousness of separate

individuality (*haumai*) that constitutes human bondage. Because of this reason Sikhism subscribes to the idea of *jīvanmukti*. A *jīvanmukta* is a person who realizes liberation in life. An understanding of the Sikh view of liberation will help us in our efforts to understand the nature of *jīvanmukta*.

Liberation in Sikhism may be understood from two standpoints, positive and negative. Positively understood, it is union with God. Macauliffe calls it 'absorption in God,'¹ McLeod refers to it as 'the union of the individual man with the being of God, the Super Soul.'² Sardul Singh describes it as 'regaining one's Divine Status'³ and Mohan Singh Diwana refers to it as 'to unite with God, who is whole, One, only—'⁴ All the traditionally used terms have been employed in Sikhism to convey the nature of the state of liberation.

Some prominent terms employed in *gurbānī* for the state of *mukti* are, *anand* (bliss), *mahāras* (the supreme state). The underlying connotation of all these terms is union with God as a result of the union, the attainment of bliss, knowledge and freedom follows. The union with God may be understood in terms of absorption in God through the process of unitive consciousness (*līva*). It is the state of constant awareness of God as the only reality.

Negatively speaking liberation is the annulment of transmigrations,⁵ i.e. the destruction of the chain of birth and death. It is the eradication of *haumai* (egoity) which in Sikhism is the main cause of bondage,⁶ it is freedom from all the attendants of transmigration, i.e. suffering; old age, death etc.⁷ The liberated person succeeds in overcoming his *haumai* and surrenders to the will of the Almighty.⁸ The stage where one transcends the ego-consciousness is called *jīvatmarna* (dying while alive). He who dies while yet alive attains the eternal life. The power of *māyā* which deludes the person

1. M.A. Macauliffe. *The Sikh Religion*, Delhi : S. Chand & Co., 1963, Vol. 1, p. lxiv.
2. W.H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 224.
3. Sardul Singh Caveeshar, *Sikh Dharam Darshan*, Patiala : Punjabi University, 1969, p. 236.
4. Mohan Singh Diwana, *Sikh Mysticism*, Amritsar : Tej Printing Press. 1964.
5. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Gauri, M. 5, (Bāvan-akhri) 38, p. 258.
6. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Suhi, M. 5, Ast.-1, p. 750.
7. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Bilāwal, M. 5, Pada-3, p. 808.
8. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Jap, M. 1 Pauṛī 2, p. 1.

in bondage through the misrepresentation of creation, fails to delude the liberated person. The liberated person knows the nature of *māyā* and transcends its delusive effects. Like a lotus in the water, he remains in the world of *māyā* without being attached to it. He rises above the three strands (*gunas*) of *māyā* and attains the fourth state (*chauthā pad*) which lies beyond the reach of the three *gunas*. At this stage the notion of duality (*dubidhā*) vanishes and the liberated person is free from all the vices. Having destroyed the notion of duality, he attains to the innate of equipoise (*sahaj*). The *jīvanmukta* becomes perfect in every respect. There is nothing that he has to accomplish.

Mukti or liberation in Sikhism is to be understood as a spiritual state and not as the attainment of heaven. Heaven in Sikhism is a state of *man* (mind) attuned to God :

“Heaven is where abide the Lord’s Saints.
Yea, where the Lord’s lotus Feet
One Enshrines in the mind.⁹

Describing the state of liberation Gopal Singh says that ‘when through love worship of God, our Ego (*haumai*) is merged in Super Ego, our passions and cravings like lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride vanish, the sense of duality between ‘I’ and ‘He’ is lost and we work and move in Lord’s Being and accept joyously His Will in whatever happens and so we merge in him whose sparks we are.’¹⁰ According to McLeod “Man’s nature for Guru Nanak is dependent upon his affiliation, and that nature is transferred when his affiliation is transferred from the world to divine Name.”¹¹ All that is needed, is not the extinction of one’s personality but the change of the object of affiliation. The change can be effected through the submission of one’s ego to the cosmic divine order (*hukam*). In the process of liberation God becomes the sole object of all affiliations. In *Gurbāṇī* the change of affiliation is understood in terms of eradicating one’s ego :

“Yea, he alone is emancipated in life
Who is rid of the ego.”¹²

9. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Sūhi, M. 5, Pada-21, p. 742.

10. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (Eng. tr.) Delhi : Gurdas Kapur & Sons, Vol.-1, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

11. W.H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, p. 177.

12. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Mārū, M. 1, Ast.-2, p. 1010.

or

"If living, one dieth (to the self) and to dying
liveth he, he is emancipated forsooth."¹³

The liberated person has variously been called *sant* (the quiescent), *panch* (the elected), *brahmagyānī* (the knower of God), *gurmukh* (one whose mind is turned towards God), etc. He attains to the innate nature (*sahajsubhāī*). He remains unaffected by the dualities and doubts. Such an attitude has repeatedly been described in *Gurbānī* :

"He who loveth from his soul the Lord's Will,
Attaineth Deliverance while yet alive.
He, who looketh alike on pleasure and pain,
Is ever in Bliss and never in Woe.
As is gold for him, so is dust.
As is poison, so is nectar.
And as is honour, so dishonour.
As is the king for him, so the beggar,
And he finds his way in the Working of His Will.
Nanak : He attaineth deliverance even in life."¹⁴

Again

"He who's affected neither by joy nor by sorrow,
and looketh upon friend and foe alike,
He, sayeth Nanak, is the Emancipated, the
Released one."¹⁵

In concluding the above brief discussion we may say that a *jīvanmukta* is a person who has realized all the attributes of liberation in life. He has attained a state of equipoise where his self will is completely attuned to the Will of God. The delusive power of *māyā* does not delude him because through the unitive consciousness (*līva*) he remains absorbed in God and thus realizes his true nature. Separation from God and self-centredness are incompatible with the nature of the liberated person. He is absolutely free here and hereafter. The physical body does not constitute bondage for him. While yet in body he transcends its limitations. In short he is God-man on earth.

13. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Bihāgarā, M. 3, Var 4, p. 550.

14. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Gauṛī, M. 5, Sukhmani 7 (9), p. 275.

15. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Slok, M. 9 (15), p. 1427.

One question that remains to be discussed briefly is that, why does he stay in the world after attaining liberation? Is he required to exhaust the *prārabdha karma* before the dissolution of the body as is held in the Advaita Vedānta? Does he withdraw from active life in society in order to enjoy the bliss of liberation or does he remain active for the accomplishment of some higher purpose?

As to the question of *prārabdha karma* (the deeds already begun) we do not find any clear answer offered in *Gurbāṇī*. Nowhere is it mentioned that the liberated person lives to exhaust his *prārabdha karma*. All that we can make out from the *Gurbāṇī* is that he continues to live in body after attaining his liberation in accordance to the will of God and to serve the purpose of God.

In order to serve the purpose of God a *jīvanmukta* remains active in society. The practice of withdrawing from active social life is not appreciated in Sikhism. The *jīvanmukta* having attained his own goal, strive to help his fellow travellers to reach their destination. He helps others to seek their liberation. Leading all the beings to liberation is the sacred duty of a *jīvanmukta* :

"The Lord's Servant saves himself
and all his kins, nay, he saves the whole world."¹⁶

Saving the whole of the world is the purpose of God. A *jīvanmukta* is an instrument in the hand of God who uses him to accomplish this purpose. He not only strives in this life, but can also take any number of births for the fulfilment of this purpose

"Above birth and death are they, for,
They come into the world to do good to others.
And they bless all with the life of the soul
and lead all to Thy worship and unite all with Thee."¹⁷

Such a noble birth does not fall in the domain of the law of *karma*. It is according to the Will of God.

It follows from the above that *jīvanmukta* is a transformed man. His transformation consists in the transformation of his worldly nature into divine nature which was already present in him but because of the perverted attitude it was not finding its expression.

16. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Gauṛī Bairāgan, M. 4, pada-2, p. 166.

17. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Sūhī, M. 5, pada-7, p. 749.

Some Issues in the Study of Faith

The present attempt is to identify some of the basic issues involved in the study of faith in the modern context. In this attempt, we shall proceed along with two classical studies of faith by the two leading scholars of our times in this field.¹ Our approach shall be more descriptive than analytical. Our only aim is to understand their interpretation of faith and to bring to light those issues which they have emphasized as basic in the modern context. If we drift away from their interpretation that would be our incapacity to understand them, than our intention to depart from them. One way of remaining close to their understanding would be to quote them profusely. It may also be mentioned here that we shall have to be very very eclectic, for it is almost impossible to discuss all those issues in this small paper, which have been taken up in these studies. We shall try to restrain ourselves primarily to those issues which are

1. Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, (New York : Harper & Row, 1957) and W.C. Smith, *Faith and Belief*, (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1979). It may be mentioned here that "Faith" is a major theme with these two scholars. In addition to the above two classical studies the following works of Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3 (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 1951-1963) especially Vol. 3, pp. 129-138. *The Courage To Be* (New Haven : Yale University Press, fourty ninth printing, 1979), (first 1952), especially pp. 171-176; *Love, Power and Justice* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1960) (first 1954) and *Theology of Culture* edited by Robert Kimball, (New York : Oxford University Press 1978), (first 1959), and the following works by Smith : *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York : Harper and Row, 1978), (first 1962); *The Faith of Othermen* (New York : Harper and Row, 1978) (first 1963); *Questions of Religious Truth* (New York : Charles Scribner's sons, 1967), *Belief and History* (Charlottesville : University Press of Virginia, 1977), *Religious Diversity* edited by Williard G. Oxtoby), New York : Harper and Row, 1976), *Towards a World Theology*, (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1981) also for further information see *Religious Diversity*, pp. 185-194.

similar in both these studies. However, we shall also refer to some of their characteristic emphases.

At first look such an attempt may seem far fetched and futile, but as one look closely, one is again and again struck by the similarities between these two treatments of the problem. And behind these surface similarities lie the struggle with the real issues, that inflict our understanding of faith in the modern times. We begin with the present state of affairs in the understanding of faith and our scholars diagnose and concern for it.

Tillich's diagnose of the present interpretations of faith and his concern for the clear understanding of it, is reflected in a very clear and precise way in the introductory remarks of his book :

"There is hardly a word in the religious language, both theological and popular, which is subject to more misunderstandings, distortions and questionable definitions than the word "faith". It belongs to those terms which need healing before they can be used for the healing of men. Today the term "faith" is more productive of disease than of health. It confuses, misleads, creates alternately scepticism and fanaticism, intellectual resistance and emotional surrender, rejection of genuine religion and subjection to substitutes. Indeed, one is tempted to suggest that the word "faith" should be dropped completely, but desirable as that may be it is hardly possible. A powerful tradition protects it. And there is as yet no substitute expressing the reality to which the term "faith" points. So, for the time being, the only way of dealing with the problem is to try to reinterpret the word and remove the confusing and distorting connotations, some of which are the heritage of centuries. It is the hope of the writer that he will succeed in his more far-reaching aim to convince some readers of the hidden power of faith within themselves and the infinite significance of that to which faith is related."²

The same concern, with the same degree of intensity reflects in his other works also :

"There are few words in the *language of religion* which cry for

as much semantic purging as the word "faith". It is continually being confused with belief in something for which there is no evidence, or in something *intrinsically* unbelievable, or in absurdities and a nonsense. It is extremely difficult to remove these distorting connotations from the genuine meaning of faith."³

"...This is partly because the concept of faith has lost its genuine meaning and has received the connotation of "belief in something unbelievable."⁴

The same concern forms the basic thesis in the study of Prof. W.C. Smith. Because his diagnose and treatment is strictly based on historical⁵ and comparative observations therefore he goes a step further in pin-pointing the real issues in a more concrete sense; still it is theoretical work— "Yet this work is directly concerned with the clarification of concepts and the careful analysis of the usage of words, in the modern fashion."⁶

This concern is repeatedly expressed with the same seriousness all through his analysis :

"One way of considering this study is to see it as an answer— however inadequate and partial—to a question highly important and relatively new : namely, what can our present awareness of the world history of religion and comparative culture contribute to our understanding of man; and particularly, of faith. One part of the answer is that historical understanding enables us and indeed forces us, to distinguish between faith and religious belief."⁷

"Our quest to understand faith as a characteristic quality or potentiality of human life."⁸

3. *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3, p. 130.

4. *The Courage To Be*, p. 172.

5. What does historical basis mean ? Here we would like to quote Willard G. Oxtoby "In the study of religion this will mean that the student must not merely generalize, but should know the minute facts of a specific tradition." (*Religious Diversity*), p. xvi.

6. *Faith and Belief*, p. vii.

7. *Ibid.*, p. viii.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

"To live religiously is not merely to live in the presence of certain symbols, but to be involved with them or through them in a quite special way—a way that may lead far beyond the symbols that may demand the totality of a person's response, and may affect one's relation not only to them but to everything else : to oneself, to one's neighbour and to the stars. It is that special involvement that pleads to be elucidated."⁹

It (i.e. present study) has two objectives. The first is simply but eagerly to plead the significance of the problem : calling attention to the nature and to the centrality of the issues involved, and urging on others the value of pursuing them. No answer that I may proffer can be nearly so important as my insistence that the question itself is major. The second objective is to take an interim step towards elucidating the nature of man's faith by exploring one particular question within the whole : namely, the relation between faith and belief."¹⁰

He continues :

"A fuller aspiration, however, is to make a contribution towards a new planetary self-consciousness about faith by attending to one question within the larger complex namely, the relation for all of us between faith and belief both positive and negative; what relation has been, and may be."¹¹

Four basic considerations explicitly merge from the above quotations :

- (a) The traditional concepts of faith obscure, rather than clarify our understanding of faith.
- (b) What is involved in the study of faith is some sort of personal involvement.
- (c) There is a new dimension in our modern experience, namely, the new awareness of the world and ourselves in the modern world, which challenges us to use Smith's characteristic expression 'forces' us to reconceptualize faith.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

- (d) One basic solution to the problem could be found by re-examining the relationship between faith and belief.

As is clear from the above quotations, Smith's book is devoted to re-examining historically, the relationship between faith and belief is in fact crucial one¹² in the study of faith. Its correct understanding not only helps to remove some of the earlier distortions of the concept of faith but also promises to provide basis for reconceptualization of faith in the light of the new awareness. Belief is not what it has come to be considered these days.¹³ "Instead of being a stepping-stone to faith, religious belief had become a barrier."¹⁴

The same crucial issue of the interrelation of faith and belief and the confusion that its misunderstanding can create in our understanding of faith has been taken up in the study of Tillich with the same intensity of concern and with the same clarity though not in the same detail and not at all historically and comparatively.

"The most ordinary misinterpretation of faith is to consider it an act of knowledge that has to low degree of evidence. Something more or less probable or improbable is affirmed

12. "If faith, rather than belief, be the fundamental religious category, as I hold, that history shows, and that rationality demands then the interrelation, between faith and belief becomes a crucial question." (*Belief and History*, p. vi).

13. "The idea that believing is religiously important turns out to be modern idea. It has arisen in recent times, in ways that can be ascertained and demonstrated... The view that to believe is of central significance. This is an aberration." *Ibid.*, p. v.

14. *Faith and Belief*, p. 124 : It may be mentioned here that the origin and development of the meaning of belief as has been traced in the study of Smith is very interesting. But we cannot take up this issue here for discussion. It would suffice to give two quotations to show what meaning it has come to acquire in the modern times and how does it differ from the faith :

"In ordinary parlance then, "Believing" is the concept by which we convey the fact that a view is held, ideationally, without a final decision as to its validity-explicitly without that decision." *Ibid.*, p. 36; and :

"The object of faith used to be a person (God and Christ in the Christian case); the object of believing has come to be an idea, a theory. Secondly the act of faith used to be a decision, the taking of a step of cosmic self-commitment; the state (*sic*) of believing has come to be a descriptive if not a passive, condition. Thirdly, the mood of faith used to involve one's relation to absolutes, to realities of surpassing grandeur and surety; the mood of believing involves one's relation to uncertainties, to matters of explicitly questionable validity," *Ibid.*, p.120.

inspite of the insufficiency of its theoretical substantiation. This situation is very usual in daily life. If this is meant, one is speaking of *belief* rather than of faith."¹⁵

Again :

"We believe the authorities, we trust their judgement, though never unconditionally but we do not have faith in them. Faith is more than that trust in authorities, although trust is an element of faith. This distinction is important in view of the fact that some earlier theologians tried to prove the unconditional authority of the Biblical writers by showing their trustworthiness. A Christian may believe the Biblical writers but not unconditionally. He does not have faith in them. He should not even have faith in the Bible. For Faith is more than trust in even the most sacred authority. It is participation in the subject of one's ultimate concern with one's whole being. Therefore, the term "faith" should not be used in connection with theoretical knowledge, whether it is a knowledge on the basis of immediate, prescientific or scientific evidence, or whether it is on the basis of trust in authorities who themselves are dependent on direct or indirect evidence."¹⁶

Again :

"One of the worst errors of theology and popular religion is to make statements which intentionally or unintentionally contradict the structure of reality. Such an attitude is an expression not of faith but of the confusion of faith with belief."¹⁷

By now, it has become clear that faith in our times in the west has come to be misunderstood and misinterpreted. One of the main reasons of this misinterpretation is to interpret faith in terms of belief. The task before scholars in this field is not only to remove these distortions but also reinterpret and reconceptualize faith in the light of modern awareness. Such an attempt naturally would involve two implications. It would not only interpret faith in terms of

15. *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 31.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

17. *Ibid.*

modernity but also modernity in terms of faith. We may now turn to see how our scholars have attempted to reinterpret and reconceptualize faith in the light of modern awareness, and how they have solved the problem of plurality and diversity, which has now come to be recognized as a basic fact.

Tillich's study opens with the definition of faith : "Faith is the state of being ultimately concerned—."¹⁸ This five-word definition is multidimensional.¹⁹ It presupposes some sort of personal involvement, "faith is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern."²⁰ Here the internal relationship between the concern and concerned (which is of course living) opens this definition to many types of interpretations.

In the case of a historian we cannot expect the definition to be at the opening of his work. But Smith's case is very complex—we do not find the definition at the end also. Here is an example of a serious and profound endeavour to interpret faith without claiming to define it. By refusing to define faith he is trying in the negative way (in the *neti neti* process) to bring home the profundity and depth of the issue. His intention can be read in some of his positive descriptions of the issue : "Faith can never be expressed in words, however : neither in an aphorism nor in many volumes. In any case it is not the task of the present work."²¹ He again says, "Faith is man's participation in God's dealings with humankind. The aphorism is inadequate : granted. I still have no desire to put aside my joyous contention that all formulations of faith fail to do it justice—to do justice either to its depth of substance, or to its variety of form."²²

Instead of defining faith, it seems, he is trying to lay the ground on the basis of which faith can be defined :

"Faith" then, I propose "shall signify that human quality that has been expressed in, has been elicited, nurtured, and shaped

18. *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 1.

19. It is rather surprising to note how Tillich has successfully interpreted all the internal and external aspects of faith in terms of this very brief and precise definition.

20. *Systematic Theology*, Vol. III, p. 130.

21. *Faith and Belief*, p. 133.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

by, the religious traditions of the world. This leaves faith unspecified, while designating its locus. We do not yet say what it is, but indicate where we are to look in order to find out.²³

Although we don't have his definition of faith, we have the basic elements of faith in his study. It is not possible to discuss faith without referring to one aspect of it or the other. By now, we know from his study, what are the elements which are going to be included in his definition of faith, if he is finally going to define it. These elements repeatedly appear on almost all the pages of his book. Sometimes most of them come so close to one another that we are tempted to call it, his definition of faith. We quote only one instance :

"Faith as a global human characteristic is-or shall we say, keeping to our more strictly historical approach faith has been man's responsive involvement in the activity of God's dealing with humankind : that ongoing and multifaceted activities. By modern eyes, unless they wear blinkers, that divine activities can be seen as having Hindu and Greek, Buddhist, and Jewish, Islamic and Christian, and many an other sector."²⁴

We are also tempted to quote the following line where he refers to the aim of his study : "It is the search for conceptual clarification on man's relation to transcendence."²⁵

Now, any attempt to interpret faith would be limited and inadequate if it does not do justice to both of its general and particular aspects. Any such attempt, as we have noted earlier would involve reconceptualization of faith. Both of our scholars have emphasized the need for such an attempt and have contributed their own share as an interim solution to the problem :

"Faith must be defined both formally and materially. The formal definition is valid for every kind of faith in all religions and cultures. Faith, formally or generally defined, is the state of being grasped by that towards which self-transcendence aspires the ultimate in being and meaning. In short formula,

23. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

one can say that faith is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern. The term "ultimate concern" unites a subjective and an objective meaning. Somebody is concerned about something he considers of concern. In this formal sense of faith as ultimate concern, every human being has faith.

—This formal concept of faith is basic and universal. It refutes the idea that world history is the battlefield between faith and un-faith (if it is permissible to coin this word in order to avoid the misleading term "unbelief")²⁶

Further, Tillich relates the same basic and universal definition of faith to a particular case of Christianity :

"Faith" is the state of being grasped by the Spiritual Presence and opened to the transcendent unity of unambiguous life. In relation to the Christological assertion, one could say that faith is the state of being grasped by the New Being as it is manifest in Jesus as the Christ. In this definition of faith, the formal and universal concept of faith has become material and particular; it is Christian."²⁷

Smith also has emphasized the need for interpreting faith in a way that may do justice to its general and particular aspects :

"No interpretation of faith in general is liable to be persuasive that is not solidly grounded in a wrestling with faith in particular yet also vice versa : one may readily argue that even Christian conceptualization of faith for the Christian case, and Muslim for the Islamic, will halt a little until they are illumined by being set now within the wider context."²⁸

Smith is far ahead of our times, in emphasizing the need for reformulating our understanding of faith in the changed historical situation. In this respect he is undoubtedly a pioneer and leading scholar of our times. Most of his works are devoted to bring home and emphasize this historical need to reformulate understanding of the religious ideas in the light of new historical awareness and also

26. *Systematic Theology*, Vol. III, p. 130.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

28. *Faith and Belief*, p. ix (preface).

to make his own interim contribution towards it. About the modern awareness he says :

"Man is entering a new phase in his and her self-consciousness, planetary, pluralist, and historical, and human society, a new phase of global conflict or community. The ideas for our new life together must themselves be new. This present work is offered as an intellectual's contribution to new thinking about man and his and her spiritual-human-living. The new thinking is radically new, yet is based upon, and continues with the past : the variegated classical heritage."²⁹

It is in the light of above historical awareness, that he has devised his own new way of writing :

"Normally I strive to write in such a way that secularists as well as men of our faith, and Buddhists as well as theists, may find these intelligible, even congenial."³⁰

Also it is in the light of modern awareness that he is trying to forge new understanding of faith. The opening sentence of his introductory chapter raises the question, "What is to become of our concept 'faith' in modern awareness ?"³¹ He wrote about his book *Faith and Belief* while it was still under preparation that, "For several years I have been preparing a sizable study, now soon to be published, exploring Buddhist, Islamic, Hindu, Medieval Christian (specifically *Credo*), and Jewish instances of this issue, and constituting perhaps, a first step towards constructing a generic conception of faith. The work is an attempt to clarify, in global perspective, the relation between faith and belief; and in particular to study the former as major world-wide category, and as significantly different from the later."³²

Again he says that, it is our modern historical consciousness, which compels us and enables us to reconceptualize our understanding of faith :

"Faith, the historian reports, is the fundamental human

29. *Ibid.*, p. ix (preface).

30. *Questions of Religious Truth*, p. 7.

31. *Faith and Belief*, p. 3.

32. *Belief and History*, p. 39.

category. What is now-a-days possible, however, and now-a-days imperative, is to attempt a generic understanding. Earlier attempts to elucidate faith have regularly been made in the particular instance of one's own tradition."³³

It seems to me that, his emphasis on formulation of a generic conception of faith derives also (beyond, historical knowledge) from his conviction that, "Truth is ultimately one, although the human forms of truth and the forms of faith decorate or bespatter our world diversely."³⁴

The above quotation brings us to another important issue of the plurality and diversity in the study of faith. One characteristic feature of our modern consciousness is recognition of the phenomenon of plurality and diversity in the religious matters. In earlier times, every community was claiming the absolute truth in their own tradition only.

Now, how our scholars take up this problem of the claim of absolute truth in one's particular tradition and the genuine recognition of diversity and plurality? This question does not seem to be very much different from the question of the general and particular ideas of faith. This question involves the problem of the criterion of absolute truth and the existential problem of ultimate commitment. We cannot say that the absolute truth rests with the generic conception which, for all practical purposes is nothing more than a theoretical construction.

Tillich, as we learn from his formal and material definition of the faith, recognizes the fact of plurality and diversity. Again, while speaking of the criterion of the history of religion he recognizes the diversity in the forms of faith and resolves the problem of the diversity and the claims of particular forms by the criterion of yes or no (defined below) :

"The truth of faith must be considered from both sides. From the subjective side one must say that faith is true if it adequately expresses an ultimate concern. From the objectives state one must say that faith is true if its content is the really ultimate.

33. *Faith and Belief*, p. 7.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

The first answer acknowledges the truth in all genuine symbols and types of faith. It justifies the history of man's ultimate concern, of his response to manifestation of the holy in many places in many ways. The second answer points to a criterion of ultimacy by which the history of religion is judged, not in terms of rejection but in terms of a yes and no."³⁵

Further, he explains this criterion in a more precise way :

"The criterion contains a yes—it does not reject any truth of faith in whatever from it may appear in the history of faith—and it contains a No—it does not accept any truth of faith as ultimate except the one that no man possesses it."³⁶

He recognizes the diversity or plurality in the manifestations of the truth but he does not recognize any particular form as ultimate.

In the writings of Smith the awareness of the diversity and plurality in the forms of faith is at its height. In his emphasis on the fact of diversity one may read that this is the most vital and sensitive issue for the modern scholars of religion to recognize and to find solution to it before proceeding further. When we call him pioneer, in the field, we mean his emphasis on this theme. This forms the major theme in his writings. Some of his books derive their names from his concern for this theme.³⁷ He not only recognizes this fact, but he emphasizes the urgency of its recognition also. In his writings, this recognition is not merely theoretical, it is based on the strong historical foundations. This is the lesson, he emphasizes, that our modern awareness of the history teaches us :

"Basic to that discussion will be recognition of diversity : diversity among communities, and among centuries (and within both). Equally basic will be a recognition that this is a common human problem, to engage us all.

Our first consideration here has to do with faith in global perspective : the fact that faith is now seen to transcend any

35. *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 96.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

37. *Religious Diversity; The Faith of Other Men; Questions of Religious Truth*, also the *Meaning and End of Religion and Belief and History*.

given form, and manifests itself as fundamentally human."³⁸

As we have noted earlier, Smith in his *Faith and Belief* is trying to forge a generic conception of faith. In such an attempt the boundaries of the forms of faith are left far behind and attention is focussed on the basic human involvement and the person. He says, "Our new endeavour is to see to interpret, rather, the human side of these involvements."³⁹

"The locus of faith is persons. It is persons, not propositions, not symbols and sacraments—though all such may be channels. The locus is communities in so far as these are personal and not merely institutionalized—although again, an institution may be faith's channel. Moreover, faith is a quality of the whole person."⁴⁰

In such an attempt the general and particular aspects are not divided, rather they are synthesized in the person :

"Universality, but also variety. I am not affirming that faith is everywhere the same. Nor do I *suggest* that it is everywhere admirable. To see faith generically is to see it historically in close or remote approximation to its truth."

What we are trying to emphasize can more clearly be seen from the following quotations of our scholars :

"Everything said about faith in the previous chapters is derived from the experience of actual faith, of faith as a living reality, or in a metaphoric abbreviation, of the life of faith."⁴¹

"Faith is not belief in a doctrine. It is not even belief in the truth as such, in the dynamic and personal sense of rallying to it with delight and engagement. It is the exclamation mark in saying not merely "yes" but "yes", to the truth when one sees it. It is the ability to see and respond."⁴²

The above two quotations seem to speak of the same basic

38. *Faith and Belief*, p. 129.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 158.

41. *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 99.

42. *Faith and Belief*, p. 168.

truth of faith. We cannot even say that they supplement each other, for, they are more than that. One still wonders further, when one is aware of the fact that there is a classical book behind each of these two quotations, written from different perspectives.

The above noted similarities of the issues in these two classical studies are interesting and also revealing, as far as the understanding of faith in the context of modern age is concerned. But more interesting point to note is that these are two different types of interpretations of the same theme. The same basic theme has been dealt with from different perspectives and in different realms. How these two studies are different from one another is again a difficult problem. These are different but not exclusive. We cannot say of *Faith and Belief* that it is not a theoretical work, similarly we cannot say of *Dynamics of Faith*, that it does not have anything to do with history.

But Smith's study of the historical relationship between faith and belief is a new and fruitful adventure and his contribution to the History of Religion. His book is a successful attempt to show that theological and philosophical generalization can be and should be synthesized with the knowledge of historical details. The historical foundations of the generalizations can provide more authenticity to the conclusions and also an earthly touch. We may say that the distinction between these two studies is not basic but of emphasis. The emphasis of Tillich is on theoretical analysis whereas the emphasis of Smith is on historical analysis. In order to understand these above theoretical observations more clearly we may turn to our scholars.

In the following passage, while discussing the relation of courage to faith, Tillich refers to the nature of his study :

"Living faith includes the doubt about itself, the courage to take his doubt into itself, and the risk of courage. There is an element of immediate certainty in every faith, which is not subject to doubt, courage and risk—the unconditional concern itself. It is experienced in passion, anxiety, despair, ecstasy. But it is never experienced in isolation from a concrete content. It is experienced in, with and through the concrete content, and only analytic mind can isolate it theoretically. Such

theoretical isolation is the basis of this whole book, it is the way to the definition of faith as ultimate concern. But the life of faith itself does not include such analytic work."⁴³

Again, while concluding his study he says :

"Faith is a concept—and a reality—which is difficult to grasp and to describe. Almost every word by which faith has been described—also on the proceeding pages—is open to new misinterpretations. This cannot be otherwise, since faith is not a phenomenon in man's personal life, manifest and hidden at the same time. It is religious and transcends religion, it is universal and concrete, it is infinitely variable and always the same. Faith is an essential possibility of man, and therefore its existence is necessary and universal."⁴⁴

Let us turn to Smith to listen what he says about the nature of his study :

"The foundation of the presentation here is however, historical; on the historical validity of the theses its force finally rests."⁴⁵

Again he says :

"My conviction is that if the work be historically valid, as I trust, then theology and also philosophy will find the innovative position relevant and perhaps compelling—and one may hope, helpful. History, as well as both theology and philosophy cannot in the end but reckon; and because of history's fundamentally human quality, cannot in the end but profit from reckoning. Our human condition today is precarious and perplexing. We do well to face it armed with the world-wide and centuries long awareness that modern historical consciousness makes available."⁴⁶

We may conclude from the foregoing that faith in the modern context has come to be misunderstood and misinterpreted. One basic reason of this misinterpretation is the confusion of faith with

43. *Dynamics of Faith*, pp. 102-103.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

45. *Faith and Belief*, p. vii (Preface).

46. *Ibid.*, p. viii.

belief. Belief in the modern Western context has come to imply unfaith. Any study of faith would be inadequate if it does not distinguish between faith and belief and does not take into account the personal quality or personal involvement which is basic characteristic of faith. Modern awareness of history also has added a powerful factor to the study of faith viz. religious diversity or plurality. Any attempt to interpret faith should do justice to particular as well as general aspect of faith. These are some of the basic issues in the study of faith which demand the attention of every serious student of religious phenomenon. These issues are repeatedly emphasized in the above classical studies of faith in our times.

Meaning of *Dharma* in the *Bhagavadgītā*

The term *dharma* occurs in *Bhagavadgītā* in the following forms in different verses :

dharma-kṣetre (I:1); *kula-dharmāḥ* (I:40); *dharme* (I:40); *adharmo* (I:41); *Jāti-dharmāḥ* (1:41); *Kula-dharmā* (1:43); *Kula dharmāṇām* (1:44); *dharma* (II:7); *Svadharmān* (II:31); *dharmyā* (*dhi-yuddhac*) (II:31); *dharmyam-saṅgrāmam* (II:33); *svadharmam* (II:33); (*asya*) *dharmasya* (II:40); *svadharma* (III:35); *para-dharmāt* (III:35); *svadharma* (III:35); *para-dharma* (III:35); *dharmasya* (*glānir bhavati*) (IV:7); (*abhyutthānam*) *adharmasya* (IV:7); *dharma* (*samsthāpanarthaya*) (IV:8); *dharmāviruddho* (VII:11) *dharmyam* (IX:2); *dharmasya* (*asya*) (IX:3); *dharmātmā* (IX:31); (*śaśvata*)-*dharma-(goptā)* (XI:18); *dharmāyamrtam* (XII:20) *dharmasya* (XIV:27); *dharmam-adharmam* (XVIII:31); *adharmam-dharmam* (XVII:32); *dharma-kāmārthān* (XVIII:34); *sva-dharma* (XVIII:47); *para-adharmāt* (XVIII:47); *sarva-dharmān* (XVIII:66); *dharmayam-saṁvādam* (XVIII:70).

We shall now analyse the meaning of each form of the term *dharma* as it emerges from the context in which the term is employed. Such an analysis may lead us to form a general meaning of the term *dharma* in *Gītā*. In the beginning of our analysis of each verse we shall give the English rendering of the verse by Franklin Edgerton.¹

I:1 Dhritaraṣṭra said :

In the Field of Right, the Kuru-field,
Assembled ready to fight,
My men and the sons of Pāṇḍus as well,
What did they do Samjaya ?

1. Franklin Edgerton, *The Bhagavad Gītā* (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1974) (first edition, 1944).

The term *dharmakṣetre* found in this verse has been interpreted by Aurobindo as "the field of the working out of the *Dharma*."² In the footnote he elaborated it : "we might symbolically translate the phrase as the field of human action which is the field of the evolving *Dharma*." At another place he has defined *dharma* as that "which one lays hold of and which holds things together, the law, the norm, the rule of nature, action and life."³ D.S. Sharma translates the term as "the field of righteous war."⁴ Radhakrishnan also has translated it as "field of righteousness."⁵ Like Aurobindo, he further symbolically elaborates : "The World is *dharmakṣetra*, the battle ground for a moral struggle. The decisive issue lies in the heart of men where the battles are fought daily and hourly. The ascent from earth to heaven, from suffering to spirit, is through the path of *dharma*. Even in our corporeal existence, through the practice of *dharma*, we reach upto safety where every difficulty culminates in joy. The world is *dharmakṣetra*, the nursery of saints where the sacred flame of spirit is never permitted to go out."⁶ Still further, he defines *dharma* as that which promotes worldly prosperity and spiritual freedom.⁷ R.C. Zaehner has translated the term to mean "the field of justice."⁸ The difficulty in translating the term *dharma* into English may be seen from the attempts of the above commentators. However, a conscious attempt to interpret the term *dharma* in terms of moral categories is evident in most of these commentaries. The term *dharma* in the Indian life conveys as vast and as central a meaning as the term "religion" conveys in Western life.

The land of the Kurūs in this verse has been called the *dharmakṣetra*, because the war which is going to be fought on this field is for the holy cause—the restoration of the declining *dharma*, in

2. Roy Anilbaran ed., *The Message of the Gita as Interpreted by Sri Aurobindo* (London : George Allen and Unwin, 1938), p. 7.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
4. D.S. Sharma, *Lectures on the Bhagavad Gītā* (Madras : By N. Subba Rau, 1937), p. 97.
5. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad Gītā* (New York : Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1948), p. 79.
6. *Ibid.*,
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80
8. R.C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gītā* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1973) (first 1969), p. 113.

which the "Immortal Guardian of the eternal *dharma*" (XI:18) is actively participating. It is the struggle for the *dharma* (II:3) or the righteous (holy) war (II:31). The term in this phrase is employed to qualify the meaning of the other term *ksetra* and not primarily to give its own meaning. Such characteristic use of the term may be seen in other verses also. This perhaps is one of the reasons for the difficulty in ascertaining the meaning of this term in the *Gītā*. It qualifies other terms, giving them meaning but itself transcending all those meanings.

The following five verses may be discussed together for they occur in the same context :

- I : 40 Upon the destruction of the family, perish
 The immemorial holy laws of the family;
 When the laws have perished, the whole family
 Lawlessness overwhelms also.
- I : 41 Because of the prevalence of lawlessness Kṛṣṇa,
 The women of the family are corrupted;
 when the women are corrupted, O, Vṛiṣṇi—clansman,
 Mixture of caste ensues.
- I : 42 Mixture (of caste) leads to naught but hell
 For the destroyers of the family and for the family;
 For their ancestors fall (to hell),
 Because the sites of (giving) food and water are interrupted.
- I : 43 By these sins of family-destroyers,
 (Sins) which produce caste-mixture,
 The caste laws are destroyed,
 And the eternal family laws.
- I : 44 When the family laws are destroyed,
 Janārdana, then for men
 Dwelling in hell certainly
 Ensues : So we have heard (from the holy Word).

The forms of the terms in these verses are "*Kula-dharmāḥ*," "*dharma*," "*adharmo*" (I:40); *adharm* (I:41); "*jātidharmāḥ*," "*Kula-dharmās*" (I:43); and "*kula-dharmaṇām*" (I:44). In the above rendering of these verses Edgerton has translated the term *dharma* as holy laws and the terms "*kula*" and "*jāti*" as "family" and "caste" respectively. Aurobindo too has translated the term *dharma* as law, but "*jāti-dharma*" and "*kula-dharma*" have been translated as "the

laws of race" and "the traditions of the family" or the "moral laws of the family".⁹ It is interesting to note that Sharma,¹⁰ Radhakrishnan,¹¹ and Zaehner¹² have also translated the term *dharma* in the present context as "law", *kula-dharma* by these commentators has been translated as "the laws of the family," but the term "*jāti*" is translated as "caste" by Sharma¹³ and Zaehner¹⁴ and "race" by Radhakrishnan.¹⁵

In the *Gītā* these words are of Arjuna, struck, by grief and compassion at the idea of destroying his own family by waging the war and with it its traditions and the laws of the clan and family which finally leads to the destruction of *varṇa-dharma* through the mixture of *varṇas*. From verse 43 we may learn the relationship of the order of *varṇas* with the laws of *jāti* (clan) and *kula* (family). The relationship is that of interdependence. It is the rules of the order of *varṇas* which sustain the rules of the clan and the family, but when the family rules are destroyed it leads to the destruction of the order of the *varṇas*. It may be seen that the rules of the family and clan operate within the rules of the order of the *varṇas*. Also we may note from these verses the characteristic features of the age when *dharma* prevails. In this age the women get corrupted, traditional wisdom of the family and clan is disregarded and the mixture of the *varṇas* arise. The ancestors are also not looked after because the rites are not performed.

We must keep in mind that these words are spoken by the unenlightened Arjuna. His understanding of *dharma* and *adharma* is to be revised by the subsequent revelation of Kṛṣṇa as the Lord. These verses therefore may not be a sure guide to lead us to the actual meaning of *dharma* in the *Gītā*. But one thing clearly emerges from this context *dharma* of the clan and the *dharma* of the family are not in any way opposed to the *varṇa-dharma*, rather they are the forms of the *varṇa-dharma* at the lower level of the society.

9. Sri Aurobindo, *op. cit.*, p. 15; in the footnote he says that *varṇa* should not be translated as caste, because the existing system is different from *varṇa* system.

10. Sharma, *Lectures on the Bhagavad Gītā*, pp. 102-03.

11. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad Gītā*, pp. 92-93.

12. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gītā*, pp. 118-19.

13. Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

14. Zaehner, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

15. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

- II : 7 My very being afflicted with the taint of weak compassion,
 I ask Thee, my mind bewildered as to the right :
 Which were better, that tell me definitely;
 I am Thy pupil, teach me that have come to Thee.

(for instruction)

Rāmānuja in the *Gītābhāṣya* interprets this term in the above verse in the sense of (caste) duty.¹⁶ Aurobindo has translated it as the "view of right and wrong."¹⁷ Radhakrishnan renders it as "duty."¹⁸ Zaehner in his commentary has translated it as "right."¹⁹ The bewilderment of Arjuna in the above context is his inability to decide the right course of action which may suit his *svabhāva* (nature). The term, therefore, seems to mean the lawful duty of a Kṣatriya.

- II : 31 Likewise having regard for thine own (caste) duty
 Thou shouldst not tremble;
 For another, better thing than a fight required by duty
 Exists not for a warrior.
- II : 33 Now if thou this duty required
 Conflict wilt not perform.
 Then thine own duty, and glory
 Abandoning, thou shalt get thee evil.

The term in these two verses is employed in the following forms : *svadharmam*, *dharmyād* (*dhiyuddhac*), *dharmyamsamgrāmam* and *svadharmam*. In the *Gītā* these are the words of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Almost all our commentators agree that by *svadharma* in this context is meant one's own duty enjoined by the order of the *varṇas* at the social level. At the individual level, *svadharma* means one's duty according to his own nature (*svabhāva*). In this sense *svadharma* is totally in conformity with the duties of one's own *varṇa*, for Kṛṣṇa says "Of Brahmins, Of Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas as also *Śūdras*, O Conqueror of the foe (Arjuna), the activities are distinguished in accordance with the qualities born of their nature" (XVIII:41)²⁰. Having taught the immortality of *ātmā* which neither slays nor is

16. Ramanuja, *The Gītābhāṣya*, trans. M.R. Sampatkumaran (Madras : M. Rangacharya Memorial Institute, 1969), p. 18.

17. Aurobindo, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

18. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad Gītā*, p. 100.

19. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gītā*, p. 123.

20. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad Gītā*, p. 364.

slayed, in (these verses Kṛṣṇa appeals to Arjuna to fight because it is his lawful duty as a Kṣatriya. The Kṣatriya who flees from his duty earns disgrace in this life and also incurs sin. The way of the Kṣatriya to the heaven is through the battlefield, by actively engaging into the struggle for *dharma* (*dharmamsaṅgrāmam*). In verse 32 Kṛṣṇa says :

Presented by mere luck,
An open door of heaven—
Happy the warriors, son of Parthā,
That get such a fight.²¹

In the *Gītā* the doctrine of *dharma* is revealed progressively. In the above verses Lord Kṛṣṇa tells only of the lower considerations which are associated with the performance of one's duty. But in the later verses he has taught the *dharma* of the equanimity of mind (II:38) which can be performed by rising above the considerations of grief and happiness, loss and gain, victory and defeat. By performing *dharma* with the evenness of mind one transcends the binding effects of *karma*, hence incurs no sin.

II : 40 In it there is not loss of a start once made,
Nor does any reverse occur;
Even a little of this duty
Saves from great danger.

In this context the term *dharmasya* means the duties performed without regard to the fruits. Dasgupta says, "the way of performing one's duties without regard to pleasures or sorrows is described as a particular and specific kind of *dharma* (*asyadharmaḥ*) distinguished from *dharma* in general."²² From verses 42-43, 45-46 and 53 of this chapter it may also be seen that the doctrine of *dharma* expounded here is different from the traditional doctrine, though it is based on it. In verse 47 and 48 of this chapter Kṛṣṇa says : "(47) [But] work alone is your proper business, never the fruits (it may produce): Let not your motive be the fruit of works nor your attachment to (mere) worklessness. (48) (Stand fast in *yoga*, surrendering attachment; in success and failure to be the same and then get busy with your works. *Yoga* means sameness—and indifference."²³

21. Edgerton, *The Bhagavad Gītā*, p. 12.

22. S.N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge : University Press, 1932), p. 487.

23. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gītā*, p. 51.

In these verses the traditional doctrines of action and renunciation have been synthesized. This synthesis provides the basis to the doctrine of *dharma* as taught in the *Gītā*. Action is a necessity for the maintenance of the world order : "As witless (fools) perform their works attached to the works (they do), so unattached, should the wise man do, longing to bring about the welfare (and coherence) of the world (III:25)."²⁴ The *Gītā* thus expounds the doctrine of renunciation in action and this is the meaning of *dharma* in the present context.

II : 35 Better one's own duty (though) imperfect,
 Than another's duty well performed;
 Better death in (doing) one's own duty;
 Another's duty brings danger.

This verse is repeated in the eighteenth chapter (XVIII:47) with a slight change. In that verse one's inner nature (*svabhāva*) is emphasized, the basis of one's duty. The forms of the term we meet in this verse are : *svadharma*, *para-dharmāt*; *svadharma*, *para-dharma*. The term *svadharma* in this context means one's own caste duty which is in accordance with one's own nature, *svabhāva* (III:33, IV:13, XVIII:47-48). Zaehner too has interpreted *sva-dharma* to mean duty of one's own *varṇa* enjoined by the order of the four *varṇas*.²⁵ The *para-dharma* in the above context seems to refer to the duty of another *varṇa*. The *Gītā* thus preaches the disinterested action but these actions must be carried out within the limits of the duties of one's own *varṇa*.

IV : 7-8 For whenever of the right
 A languishing appears, son of Bharata,
 A rising up of unright,
 Then I send myself forth.
 For the protection of the good,
 And for destruction of evil-doers,
 To make a firm footing for the right,
 I come into being in age after age.

In these verses Kṛṣṇa tells the purpose of his incarnation, which is to restore and re-establish the declining ancient *dharma* by destroying the evil forces of *adharma*. Rāmānuja interprets *dharma*

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 394-95.

in the present context as "that which ought to be done as determined by the arrangement of the four castes and stages of life, and taught in the Vedas."²⁶ Dasgupta says "In the *Gītā*, IV:7 and 8 the word *dharma* is used in the sense of the established order of things and conventionally accepted customs and practices."²⁷ Again he says. "*Dharma* does not in the *Gītā* mean sacrifices (*Yajna*) for external advantages, as it does in *Mīmāṃsā*, but the order of conventional practices involving specific caste-divisions and caste duties."²⁸ *Dharma* in these verses has been translated by Radhakrishnan as "righteousness". He further explains, "*Dharma* literally means mode of being. It is the essential nature of a being that determines its mode of behaviour. So long as our conduct is in conformity with our essential nature, we are acting in the right way. *Adharma* is nonconformity of all beings to their respective natures, the disharmony of the world is due to their nonconformity." He continues, "The conception of *dharma* is a development of the idea of *ṛta* which connotes cosmic as well as moral order in *Rig. Veda*."²⁹ Regarding the meaning of the term *dharma* in this context, we may agree with the analysis of Zaehner who says. *Dharmasya* 'the laws of righteousness': both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja take this to mean the ancient Hindu system of the four classes and the four stages of life that the three superior classes were supposed to observe. In this they are almost certainly right since in II:13 Kṛṣṇa claims to have founded the system himself."³⁰

VII :11 Might of the mighty am I too,
 (Such as is) free from desire and passion;
 So far as it is not inconsistent with right, in creatures.
 I am desire. O best of Bharatas.

This verse does not help much to clarify the meaning of *dharma*. All that it seems to suggest is that the *dharma* is in conformity with the divine will. Aurobindo has discussed this inner relationship at some length.³¹

26. Ramanuja, *The Gītābhāṣya*, p. 117.

27. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, p. 487.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Ramanuja, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

30. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gītā*, p. 184.

31. Aurobindo, *The Bhagavad Gītā*, pp. 109-10.

- IX :2-3 A royal science, a royal mystery
 A supreme purifier is this,
 Immediately comprehensible righteous,
 Easy to carry out, imperishable.
 Men who put no faith
 In this religious truth, scorcher of the foe,
 Do not attain Me, and return
 On the path of the endless round of deaths.

In these two verses the terms *dharmyam* (2) and *dharmasyā'syā* (3) seem to mean different things. In this chapter the Lord Kṛṣṇa is going to reveal the new *dharma* the doctrine of devotion to God. In the first verse the Lord says that what he is going to reveal is in accord with the law (*dharma*). The meaning of *dharmyam* in this verse is the same as in verse IV:7. The term *dharmasyā'syā* in this context means devotion to God which is going to be taught in this chapter and the culmination of this revelation in this chapter is found in verse 34, which says : "On Me fix thy mind; to Me be devoted; worship Me; revere Me; thus having disciplined thyself, with Me as thy goal to Me shalt thou come."³² The same meaning of the term emerges clearly from the following verse :

- IX :31 Quickly his soul becomes righteous,
 And he goes to eternal peace.
 Son of Kunti, make sure of this :
 No devotee of Mine is lost.

In this verse *dharmātmā* is the person who is devoted to God.

- XI :18 Thou art imperishable, the supreme Object of knowledge;
 Thou art the ultimate resting place of this universe;
 Thou art the Immortal Guardian of the eternal right;
 Thou art the everlasting Spirit, I hold.

These are the words of Arjuna. Having seen the Supreme Divine form he praises the Lord. Among other attributes he remembers the Lord as *sāsvatadharmagoptā* "the undying guardian of the eternal law."³³ The term *dharma* in this verse refers to the same meaning as in verse IV:7. Rāmānuja also has interpreted the term in the same sense. He says, "The protector of perpetual *dharma*, that

32. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad Gītā*, p. 254.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 275.

is, He who protects the eternal *dharma* of the (eternal) Veda with the help to incarnations like this..."³⁴

XII :20 But those who this nectar of duty
Revere as it has (now) been declared,
Having faith (in it), intent on Me,
Those devotees are beyond measure dear to Me.

The term *dharmyāmrtam idam* in this verse clearly refers to the doctrine taught in this chapter which is devotion to God with equanimity of mind. The term therefore refers to the devotion of evenmindedness to God. Rāmānuja has interpreted this term to mean as nectar of virtuous conduct which for him is synonymous with the discipline of devotion.³⁵ This term *dharmyāmrtam idam* in this context therefore seems to mean "this immortal (doctrine of) evenminded devotion."

XIV :27 For I am the foundation of Brahman,
The Immortal and Imperishable,
And of the eternal right,
And of absolute bliss.

In the present verse the phrase *śāśvatasya ca dharmasya* have the same meaning as in verse XI:18 which we have discussed before.

It may be mentioned here that the term *dharma* and *adharma* also occur in verses XVIII:31,32 and 34. The main aim in these verses is to teach the types of understanding and steadiness according to the different constituents of nature. Therefore the terms *dharma* and *adharma* in these verses are employed in the sense of right and unright, i.e. what is in accordance with the *dharma* and what is not.

XVIII :66 Abandoning all (other) duties,
Go to Me as thy sole refuge;
From all evils I thee,
Shall rescue: be not grieved !

This verse constitutes the climax of the revelation in the *Gītā*. It contains the most secret truth of all (*sarvaguhyatamam*). The phrase *sarvadharmān parityajya* has been interpreted differently by different scholars. Rāmānuja has interpreted this verse as follows :

34. Ramanuja, *The Gītābhāṣya*, p. 314.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 352.

"Renouncing all *dharma*s which consist of *karma-yoga*, *jnāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga*, which constitute the means for the highest good (of salvation), and which are being performed with great love as my worship according to qualification (renouncing them all) with the complete renunciation of the sense of agency, possessiveness in works, fruits and such other things, in the manner taught : (having done so), continuously think of Me as the agent, the object of worship, the goal of attainment and the means."³⁶ This interpretation of renouncing all duties corresponds with the doctrine of renunciation in the *Gītā* as expounded in verses XVIII:4-9 "Abandoning all duties" in this verse does not seem to mean "renouncing all action" as Śaṅkara has interpreted. This meaning is neither in accordance with the setting of this *dharmyam saṁvādam* (epithet of the *Gītā* as in verse XVIII:70) nor in accordance with the doctrine of renunciation taught in the *Gītā*.

It seems that in this verse Kṛṣṇa in expounding the highest form of devotion which consists in devoting to God by surrendering the desire for the fruits of action as well as the actions, i.e. considering God the sole agent of actions. The actions in this sense are not our actions but God's. Verse XVIII:59 seems to suggest this possibility in which Kṛṣṇa says, "If indulging in self-conceit, thou thinkest 'I will not fight,' vain is this, thy resolve. Nature will compel thee."³⁷ So it is in this sense that Kṛṣṇa is asking Arjuna to abandon all duties. This is the highest form of *dharma* in the *Gītā* which teaches renunciation of the *dharma*s.

The foregoing analysis of the term tends to lead us to the following general conclusion regarding the meaning of *dharma* in the *Bhagavadgītā*. A note of caution is in order at this point : as far as possible the term *dharma* should not be translated into English in any analysis, for any translation of this term would not do justice to its meaning. The *Gītā* does not make any claim to propound any new doctrine of *dharma*. All that it emphasizes and aims at is to re-establish ancient *dharma* (IV:7-8). So the first and basic meaning of the term *dharma* in the *Gītā* is the duties (ethical as well as ritualistic) enjoined by the fourfold order of the society. In the *Gītā*

36. *Ibid.*

37. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad Gītā*, p. 373.

IV:13 Kṛṣṇa clearly mentions that he himself had created the fourfold order of the society. In verses XVIII:41-44 he has enumerated the duties of the different *varṇas*. Again in verses XVI:23-24 he says that ancient religious texts should be the main authority or guide of the moral and religious conduct. In verse IX:2, before teaching the merits of the devotion of evenmindedness, he says that this is also in accordance with the *dharma*. The terms *svadharma*, *kuladharma* and *jātidharma* also refer to the above meaning at the levels of the individual, the family and the clan. The *para-dharma* in the *Gītā* means the duties of the *varṇa* other than one's own. *Adharma* is the absence of the practice of the *dharma*. The *dharma* as mentioned above is the eternal *dharma* (*śāśvata-dharma*) as we have seen in verses XI:18 and XIV:27.

But in addition to this basic meaning of *dharma*, we also find another important meaning of the term in the *Gītā*. In verse II:40 *dharma* is meant as the way of performing one's duties without regard to its fruits. In verse IX:3 the term *dharmaśyāśyā* is employed in the sense of devotion to God. Again in verse XII:20 the term *dharma'yāmṛtam idam* in the context seems to mean "this immortal (doctrine of) evenminded devotion." In verse XVIII:66 *sarvadharmān paritīyaja* seems to mean devoting to God by surrendering not only the desire for fruits of actions but actions as well. That means seeking refuge in God by considering Him only the agent of actions.

From this brief discussion we may conclude that the term *dharma* as it is employed in the *Bhagavadgītā* conveys two general meanings. The basic meaning of the term is traditionally accepted *dharma*: what Dasgupta has called, "the order of conventional practices, involving specific caste-divisions and caste duties."³⁸ or what P.V. Kane says is "the privileges, duties and obligations of a man, his standard of conduct as a member of one of the castes, as a person in a particular stage of life."³⁹ The second meaning of *dharma* in the *Gītā* is the evenminded devotion to God accompanied by absolute surrender. This second meaning of the term does not oppose the basic meaning rather it accepts the basic meaning as its precondition.

38. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, p. 487.

39. P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol I. Part 1 (Poona : Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1968), p. 3.

Meaning of Love-Play in the *Gītagovinda*

The *Gītagovinda* is a Sanskrit lyrical poem, composed by Jayadeva, a poet in the court of king Lakṣamana Sena of Bengal. The poem concentrates on the love-play of Kṛṣṇa with Rādhā (Rādhikā, Rādhē), a cowherdess of Vrindāvana, during his youthful days among the Gokulas. The beauty of the poem consists in its unparalleled aesthetic accomplishments and musical qualities. It is a work of the highest poetic merits, a piece of art. It can be enjoyed at various levels such as religious, aesthetic, erotic, etc. But that is not what the poem is all about. It is a love-play in which Kṛṣṇa, an incarnation of Viṣṇu, is the hero (*nāyaka*). Since its very inception, the poem has exerted a tremendous influence on life and arts of Indian people in both secular and sacred terms. At an early date it became a part of the ritualistic and devotional service of the deity in the temples. For the last seven centuries it has been a part of worship of deity in the Jagannātha temple at Puri in Orissa. "As early as the thirteenth century it was quoted in a temple inscription in Gujarat in Western India."¹ Nowadays, these songs and the theme are sung everywhere in all the Vaiṣṇava temples. The text is a part of the canon of the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal.² It is very popular among the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava sect of Chaitanya of the fifteenth century Bengal, who himself came to be regarded as an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā

1. Miller, Barbara Stoler, *Love Songs of the Dark Lord: Jayadeva's Gītagovinda* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1977), p. IX (Preface).
2. Siegel Lee, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love in Indian Traditions as exemplified in the Gītagovinda of Jayadeva* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 26. "The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās regarded the twelfth-century poet Jayadeva as their *Ādi Gurū*, their first teacher, and his poem the *Gītagovinda*, as a revelation of their doctrine of sacred lore."

both in one. Its influence is not restricted to interior of the temples only even today in the remotest corners of the country the slumber of the early morning is broken by the melodious songs flowing from the unwashed throats, chanting 'Rādhe Śyāma, Rādhe Śyāma.' Its influence can be traced on the secular and religious poetry of all the later centuries. In the realm of the aesthetic arts, it is a perennial source of inspiration. The eighteenth century Rajasthani and Pahārī (Kāñgrā) miniature paintings have beautifully depicted the scenes of Kṛṣṇa's love-making with Rādhā. In spite of all these, this is not a poem *about* something, it *is* something. The theme of the poem is as ambiguous as the love itself, with which it deals. It is rather difficult to be comprehended easily.³

There is not much disagreement among the scholars and lay people about what we have spoken so far of the poem. The most controversial issue about the poem is its frank eroticism and illegitimate *parakīyā-prema*. For the idealized form of love in India is the conjugal love of man and woman. *Sati* is the ideal devotee and the ideal for woman in the Indian society. *Parakīyā-prema* (love with another's wife) is always set in opposition to *svakīyā-prema* (love with one's own wife). The main theme of the poem, as we have noticed in the beginning, is about the love of Kṛṣṇa for Rādhā his mistress, a cowherdess of Vrindāvana. The very setting of this love-play points to the mode of expression the poet intends to employ. The first canto of the first part may be cited as an example which precedes even the invocation of the ten *avatāras* of Viṣṇu :

Clouds thicken the sky.
 Tamāla trees darken the forest.
 The night frightens him.
 Rādhā; you take him home !
 They leave at Nanda's order,
 Passing trees in thickets on the way,

3. Siegal says, "In conclusion there can only be inclusion. The text is equivocal; the context is evasive. But because the *Gītāgovinda* is poem, a literary work, and not a philosophical tractate, a theological work, its ambivalence is not its defect, but, on the contrary, it is its essential meaning and power. The meaning of the specific text, like the nature of love itself, the universal theme with which it deals, is necessarily ambiguous and mysterious love..." p. xiii (intro.).

Until secret passions of Rādhā and Mādhava
Triumph on the Jamnā river bank.(I.1)⁴

The use of eroticism is so prominent in all the songs that sometimes the religious symbolism is also employed to give expression to the sensuous or profane :

When he was together with you before the perfections (*siddhi*) of love were attained; truly there at love's great-pilgrimage-place (*mahātīrtha*) in the grove again Mādhava, meditating (*dhyaī*) on you, constantly chanting (*jap*) also a string of sacred sounds (*mantra*) as invocation to you alone, desires again the nectar of ardent embraces of the pitchers of your breasts. (V.7.)⁵

The symbolism employed in the above canto is that of a *yogi* or an ascetic sitting in his grove, chanting *mantras* and meditating on an object.

Now, how are we to understand this frank eroticism in this love-play in which the *nāyaka* (hero) is an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu ? How is the relationship of the sacred and profane love to be understood in the context of this lyrical love-drama ? Is it a religious, a secular or an erotic composition ? What aim does the poet have in his mind in employing the whole erotic setting in order to portray the love-play of the deity ? Who is Rādhā ? Does she have any claim or is she just a symbolic representation of something else ? Is this not a *parakīyā-prema* saga ? These and many other related questions have been raised time and again, and different solutions have been suggested which lead to various different interpretations of the poem. It is not here possible for us to go into all those differing interpretations. We shall try to limit ourselves to the poem itself, especially to those contexts where the poet himself seems to refer to the above questions.

The use of the erotic idiom is not new in the *Gītagovinda*. It has been employed since the earlier time of which we have available records.⁶ It is always in terms of the patterns of human relations that

4. Miller, *Love Songs of the Dark Lord : Jayadeva's Gītagovinda*, p. 69.

5. Siegal, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love in Indian Traditions as exemplified in the Gītagovinda of Jayadeva*, p. 30.

6. "Just as a man, closely embraced by his loving wife knows nothing without, nothing within, so does this 'person' closely embraced by the Self that consists of wisdom, —

the divine human relations are articulated. The sacred always reveals itself through the profane. God always employs the human language while talking to human beings.

In the first place, all that we can understand from the poem itself is that it is deeply religious or sacred, rather a revelation (see also fn. 2). The hero of the play is not an ordinary human being; he is god himself. According to Jayadeva it is a divine-play :

Jayadeva, wandering king of bards
who sing at Padmāvatī's lotus feet,
was obsessed in his heart
By rhythms of the goddess of speech,
And he made this lyrical poem
From tales of the passionate play
When Kṛṣṇa loved Sri. (I.2)⁷

It is the revelation of the sacred in the erotic mood :

His musical skill his meditation on Viṣṇu
His vision of reality in the erotic mood,
His graceful play in these poems,
All show that master-poet Jayadeva's soul
Is in perfect tune with Kṛṣṇa—
Let blissful men of wisdom purify the world
By singing his *Gītagovinda*. (XII. 21)⁸

Siegel too seems to have reached the same conclusion. "The *Gītagovinda* then is sacred because it is about Kṛṣṇa, regardless of how profanely it depicts him." In the poem the poet not only concentrates on portraying the love-play but also expresses his own love and devotion to God :

Jayadeva's song evokes the potent memory of Hari's feet,
Colouring the forest in spirngtime mood heightened by Love's
presence.(I.34)⁹

➤ know nothing without, nothing within" (*Bṛh. Up.* IV iii. 21). Cf. Siegel, *op.cit.*, p. 14; and the close relationship between sacrifice and sexuality is expressed in the following words : "Woman is a fire, Gautama; the phallus is her fuel; the hair are her smoke; the vulva is her flame; when a man penetrates her, that is her coal; the ecstasy is her sparks (*Bṛh. Up.* VI. ii. 13) *Ibid.*, p. 16.

7. Miller. *Love Songs of the Dark Lord: Jayadeva's Gītagovinda*, p. 69.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 125; Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love in Indian Traditions as exemplified in the Gītagovinda of Jayadeva*, p. 39.

9. Miller, *op.cit.*, p. 75.

May singing Jayadeva's song
Give pleasure to the worshipper at Kṛṣṇa's feet ! (IV.18)¹⁰

or

Jayadeva's speech takes refuge at Hari's feet,
Keep it in your heart like a tender girl skillful in love. (VII.10)¹¹

Another closely related question may be taken up here. If the *Gītagovinda* is a religious and devotional song, why has the poet sung it against such an erotic setting, and does the erotic idiom and erotic setting of the whole love-play have any special motive ? The poet makes it sufficiently clear that the poem sings the praises of Hari in one particular (i.e. erotic) mood :

Jayadeva, king of poets, echoes Hari's merit in the mood of his song.
(VII.29)¹²

It is, as we have referred above, "His vision of reality in the erotic mood". (XII.27)¹³

The poem seems to have been composed with a special aim. In the *kali* age (*kaliyuga* : the age when *tāmasika-guṇa* predominates the lives of the people) it is difficult to attach to the lotus feet of the lord through *śānta*, *dāsyā*, *vātsalya*, *sākehya* etc. *bhāvas*.¹⁴ However, *mādhurya-bhāva* (the most intense and intimate emotion of love, of lover for beloved, the love that the *gopīs* felt for Kṛṣṇa) is still relevant to the *kali* age. It is the characteristic of this age that the love and worship of the lord through the medium of the bodily love is still effective. This is the grace of the God that for the liberation of the people in this dark age the darklord has revealed his vision in the

10. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

14. "The term *bhāva* in Sanskrit indicates an intense personal emotion that becomes transformed by the qualities of poetry into a *rasa*, an impersonalised condition of aesthetic enjoyment. The Bengal Vaiṣṇavas adopted this poetic theory to their concept of religious realization. To the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas *bhāva* is the worshipful attitude that the bhakta assumes towards Kṛṣṇa; *rasa* is the experience of the pure bliss of the love relationship between the two". Edward C. Dimock Jr. 'Doctrine and Practice among the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal' in *Krishna : Myths, Rites and Attitudes*, ed. by Milton Singer (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 118-119.

erotic mood. This aim of the poet is repeatedly emphasized all through the songs of this love-play; to cite only a few of them :

If remembering Hari enriches your heart,
If his act of seduction arouses you,
Listen of Jayadeva's speech
In these sweet soft lyrical songs. (I:4)¹⁵
Jayadeva's song evokes the potent memory of Hari's feet,
Colouring the forest in springtime mood heightened by Love's
presence.(I:34)¹⁶

The following song seems to express this idea in most explicit terms :

When he quickens all things
To create bliss in the world,
His soft black sinuous lotus limbs
Begin the festival of love
And beautiful cowherd girls wildly
Wind him in their bodies
Friend, in spring young Hari plays
Like *erotic mood incarnate*. (I:46)¹⁷
Poet Jayadeva sings
To describe Kṛṣṇa's desolation
When your heart feels his strong desire
Hari will rise to favour you. (V.6.)¹⁸

The following verses seem to reflect the Lord's passionate concern to save the lost soul :

Mādhava still waits for you
In Love's most secret thicket...(V.7)¹⁹

or

Kṛṣṇa is watching you Rādhā !
Let him celebrate your coming ! (V.19)²⁰
Jayadeva's speech takes refuge at Hari's feet
Keep it in your heart like a tender girl skillful in love. (VII.10)²¹

15. Miller, *Love Songs of the Dark Lord : Jayadeva's Gītāgovinda*, p. 69.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

May Hari's delight in Jayadeva's song

Bring an end to this dark time. (VII.20)²²

Jayadeva, king of poets echoes Hari's merit in the mood of his song,

Let evil dark-age rhythms cease at the feet of Madhu's foe. (VII.9)²³

Make your heart sympathetic to Jayadeva's splendid speech !

Recalling Hari's feet is elixir against fevers of this dark time.

(XIII.19)²⁴

We can safely assume on the basis of the above verses that the play centres around the saving act and the grace of the 'erotic mood incarnation' of Viṣṇu who has revealed this vision in order to secure the release of the devotees in this dark age. The candle of the devotion of God in this dark age can be kept burning in one's heart 'like a tender girl skillful in love'. Such a gift is rare : "Listen sages ! Heaven rarely yields such sweet elixir". (VIII.9)²⁵

We may now turn our attention to the question of Rādhā in this lyrical love-play of Jayadeva. There is no coherent account of Rādhā in any authentic source. She is not mentioned by name in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, although both of these *Purāṇas* have included the account of Kṛṣṇa's love-play with the *gopīs* in Vrindāvana (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, V. 13. 30-41; *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, X.30. 38-39) Majumdar writes, "There is however, a fairly ancient literary tradition which depicts her as a village belle and the typical amorosa."²⁶ Siegel says, "Rādhā is at once the stereotypical heroine of court poetry, the ideal beauty of the erotic text-books, the goddess incarnate, the feminine power emanating from the God the female principle, and she also came to represent the devotee."²⁷ Siegel's account of Rādhā seems to be exhaustive. Rādhā means different things in all the different religious sects. Although she stepped into Sanskrit literature later, she is mentioned in other literary works of considerably earlier period.

"The earlier text", says Majumdar, "in which Rādhā is coupled

22. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

26. Majumdar, A.K., *Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava Studies* (Jijnasa : Calcutta, 1978), p. 116.

27. Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love in Indian Traditions as exemplified in the Gītāgovind of Jayadeva*, p. XII (Introduction).

with Kṛṣṇa is the *Gāthā-Śaptasatī*, an anthology of *Prākṛit* verses ascribed to the Sātavāhana king, Hāla, who flourished about the third century A.D.²⁸ The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* also mention one cowherd girl favourite to Kṛṣṇa but they do not give her name. "It appears," says Majumdar, "that the earliest Sanskrit writer who mentioned Rādhā was Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa, the author of *Benīsamhāra*."²⁹ The date of Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa, is said to be 700 A.D. Majumdar has suggested six traditions regarding the time of the inclusion of Rādhā in the Hindu pantheon.³⁰ In the later centuries among the followers of Chaitanya and among the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas the concept of Rādhā is that of the creative energy of the Lord Viṣṇu and the female principle in the *tantric* fashion, the theme of Rādhā is inexhaustible and is beyond our present limited scope. In the *Gītagovinda*, her divinity is not clearly maintained. She is portrayed as a simple cowherd girl, a favourite friend of Kṛṣṇa in Vrindāvana. We do not clearly know whether she is married or not. Although her divine birth is not clearly mentioned, yet from the few verses we may infer that she is an incarnation of Śrī, the consort of Viṣṇu. In the second song of the First Part, the poet seems to refer to hero and heroine of the love-play.

By rhythms of the goddess of speech,
And he made this lyrical poem
From tales of the passionate play
When Kṛṣṇa loved Śrī. (I.2)³¹

Again the poet seems to refer to the same theme, i.e. love-play of Viṣṇu and Śrī :

You rest on the circle of Śrī's breast,
Wearing your ear-rings; (I.17)³²

and

Your eyes are night birds drinking from Śrī's moon face; (1:23)³³

28. Majumdar, *Gaudīya-Vaiṣṇava Studies*, p. 113.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

31. Miller, *Love Songs of the Dark Lord : Jayadeva's Gītagovind*, p. 69.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

again

As he rests in Śrī's embrace on the soft slope of her breast. (1.25)³⁴

From these verses we may assume that though not clearly maintained, Rādhā is an incarnation of the consort of Viṣṇu. It is maintained in many Purāṇas that whenever Viṣṇu incarnates she too comes with him. The second possible interpretation of Rādhā can be that she is the symbolic representation of an ideal devotee. Gonda seems to be in agreement to this view. He writes, "At the same time, however, the romance of this perpetual love-affair is a symbol and interpretable as mystic and erotic relations between the devout human soul and God. Rādhā is the soul, which yearning for God, has found the way to Him and is worthy of His love."³⁵ Redington in his introductions has referred to the three-fold meaning of the love-play of Kṛṣṇa : firstly, it is free from passion; secondly, it is the delight of Kṛṣṇa with himself; and thirdly, Kṛṣṇa is above ethics.³⁶

The meaning of the love-play in the *Gītagovinda* can be understood on somewhat close lines to the above interpretations. If we keep in mind that this is a divine love-play in which the *nāyaka* is Viṣṇu himself and if we take into account the views of the poet, it is almost impossible to interpret it in secular or erotic sense. We may say by way of conclusion that the love-play in the *Gītagovinda* is the *līlā* of Lord Viṣṇu. It is his saving grace. According to the characteristic of the age, he has revealed himself in erotic mood for the liberation of the devotees. The devotees in this dark age can easily attach themselves to the Lord and seek their liberation. This perhaps is the main aim of the poem. This may be the reason for its central place in the Vaiṣṇava worship. Summarily, the love-play is the *līlā* of the Lord for the redemption of the devotees through the easy way in this age of *kali*.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

35. Gonda J., *Viṣṇuism and Sivaism : A Comparison* (London : London University, the Athlone Press, 1970), p. 129.

36. Redington, James Duggonm, *The Meaning of Kṛṣṇa's Dance of Love According to Vallabhāchārya* (The University of Wisconsin, Madison, Ph. D. Thesis 1975).

Nature and Meaning of *Tawakkul* in Šūfism

We may begin by relating a story from the Šūfī literature :

"I have read that when Ibrāhīm Khawwās was asked concerning the reality of faith he replied : 'I have no answer to this question just now, because whatever I say is a mere expression, and hehoves me to answer by my actions; but I am setting out for Mecca : do thou accompany me that thou mayest be answered.' The narrator continues : I consented. As we journeyed through the desert, every day two cups of water appeared. He gave one to me and took the other for himself. One day an old man rode up to us and dismounted and conversed with Ibrāhīm for a while; then he left us. I asked Ibrāhīm to tell me who he was. He replied : 'This is the answer to thy question.' 'How so ?' I asked. He said : 'This was Khidr, who begged me to let him accompany me, but I refused, for I feared that in his company I might put confidence in him instead of in God, and then my trust in God (*tawakkul*) would have been vitiated. Real faith is trust in God.'¹

Although the story primarily is told in the context of *Imān*, it is as much relevant in the context of *tawakkul*. It points out a very crucial problem characterstic of the realm of mystical experience. The meanings of specifically mystical 'terms' cannot be expressed at the level of 'mere expression' because the meaning that they enshrine always eludes expression at the literal or conceptual level. This perhaps is the reason that the role of language in this realm of experience is more symbolic and metaphorical than literal and

1. 'Alī b. 'Uthmān al-Jullabī al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf al-Mahjūb*, trans. by R.A. Nicholson (London : Luzac and Co. 1911), pp. 289-90.

conceptual. Myths and symbols, metaphors and ideograms² are more frequently used in this realm than ideas and concepts.

The term *tawakkul* belongs to the same category of terms which are more symbolic and metaphorical than conceptual or rational. In the words of Rudolf Otto we can say that it is an 'ideogram,' an analogy borrowed from ordinary human experience in order to express something 'wholly other'. It is employed to designate a vast and rich realm of meanings which are not only mystical and experiential but also ethical and practical, not only rational but also paradoxical. The meaning of such terms can more easily be suggested than taught. I am tempted to find recourse to another small story to make the above point clear :

"I heard an old man relate that only one day he went to the place where al-Daqqāq held his meetings, with the intention of asking him about the state of those who trust in God (*mutawakkilan*). Al-Daqqāq was wearing a fine turban manufactured in Tabaristān, which the old man coveted. He said to al-Daqqāq : 'What is trust in God?' The Shaykh replied : 'To refrain from converting people's turbans.'³

Any attempt to abstract and analyse the meanings of these 'terms' or categories such as *tawakkul* is bound to be inadequate, for their reality is revealed not only in thoughts but also in actions based on emotional responses. It is better to know of these limitations at the beginning so that one does not get upset at the end.

The doctrine of *tawakkul* is firmly grounded in the revelation and the tradition of Islam. In following this doctrine the Šūfis were not following, as was maintained by Margaret Smith, "in the steps of the Christian ascetics and mystics who had preceded them."⁴ *Tawakkul* in fact is one of the basic doctrines of Islam and it is from this doctrine that the faith derives its name. The attitude of submission (Islam) is the logical outcome of the doctrine of trust

2. An 'ideogram like myth' is an illustrative and symbolic substitute for concepts especially coined by Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (London : Oxford University Press, 1980; first printed 1923, Eng. trans. by John W. Harvey).

3. Al-Hujwiri, p. 163.

4. Margaret Smith, *The Way of the Mystics : The Early Christian Mystics and the Rise of the Šūfis* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1978, first in 1931), p. 172.

in God (*tawakkul*).⁵ Without putting trust in God submission cannot be practised. Many verses in the Qur'an explicitly enjoin upon the believers to have full trust in God :

So put your trust (in Allāh) if ye are indeed believers.⁶

In Allāh let believers put their trust.⁷

And trust thou in the Living One who dieth not, and hymn His praise.

He sufficeth as the knower of His bondmen's sins.⁸

And will provide for him from (a quarter) whence he hath no expectation, and whosoever putteth his trust in Allāh, He will suffice him.⁹

And there is a tradition of the Prophet which says : "If ye trusted in God as ye should, He would sustain you even as He sustains the birds, which in the morning go forth hungry and return in the evening filled."¹⁰

Another important source of the doctrine of *tawakkul* in Šūfism is the doctrine of *Tauhīd*. Islam in its insistence on the doctrine of Oneness of God is almost uncompromising. Ibrāhim b. Adham's pupil Shāfiq of Balkh (d. 194/810) is said to be the first man to define *tawakkul* as a mystical state (ḥāl).¹¹ He has defined the interrelationship between the doctrine of *Tauhīd* and the doctrine of *tawakkul* as follows :

"There are three things which a man is bound to practise. Whosoever neglects any one of them must need neglect them

5. "The word Islam, finally adopted by Mohammad as the distinctive name of the faith which he preached, means 'submitting (onself or one's person to God).'" H.A.R. Gibb, *Mohammedanism : An Historical Survey* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1979, first 1949), p. 1.

6. *The Meaning of the Glorious Qoran*, trans. by Mohammad Marmaduke Pickthall (New York : A Mentor Book), V:23, p. 99.

7. *Ibid.*, xiv : 11, p. 187.

8. *Ibid.*, xxv : 58, p. 263.

9. *Ibid.*, lxx : 3, p. 403.

10. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, I, pp. 30-52. A.J. Arberry, *Šūfism : An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (New York : Harper and Row, 1970), p. 27.

11. Louis Massignon, "Tasawwuf" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 683 a.

all, and whosoever cleaves to any one of them must needs cleave to them all. Strive, therefore, to understand, and consider heedfully.

"The first is this, that with your mind and your tongue and your actions you declare God to be One; and that, having declared Him to be One, and having declared that none benefits you or harms you except Him, you devote all your actions to Him alone. If you act a single jot of your actions for the sake of another, your thought and speech are corrupt, since your motive in acting for another's sake must be hope or fear; and when you act from hope or fear of other than God, Who is the Lord and sustainer of all things, you have taken to yourself another god to honour and venerate.

"*Secondly*, that while you speak and act in the sincere belief that there is no god except Him, you should trust Him more than the world or money or uncle or father or mother or any on the face of the earth.

"*Thirdly*, when you have established these two things, namely sincere belief in the unity of God and trust in Him, it behoves you to be satisfied with Him and not to be angry on account of anything that vexes you. Beware of anger! Let your heart be with Him always, let it not be withdrawn from Him for a single moment."¹²

Following the above interpretation of Shāfiq we may say that *tawakkul* is the only mode of expression of one's genuine faith in the unity of God. Among the other possible secondary sources of the doctrine may be enumerated the Islamic emphasis on predestination and man's weakness and sinfulness against the overpowering might and fear of God. These doctrines also inevitably lead man to put trust in God the only way to escape the wrath of God. But the positive commandments in the Qur'ān, the doctrine of *Tauhīd* and tradition of the prophet are the only primary sources of the doctrine of *Tawakkul*.

12. R.A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. 1970), pp. 42-43.

The doctrine of *tawakkul* is the central doctrine in the Šūfī path of purification. It is a basic category or a key concept for the one who is interested in understanding the nature of the Šūfī path. "The definition of *tawakkul*," says Annemarie Schimmel, "is of central importance for an understanding of classical Šūfī thought."¹³ Schimmel continues, "The importance of the problem of *tawakkul* for early Šūfī thought and practice can be understood from the fact that the earliest standard work on mysticism, Abū-Tālib al-Makki's *Qūt al-qulūb*, contains sixty pages (big folio with very small print) about this topic, more than about any other aspect of Šūfism."¹⁴ In the systematized Šūfī path *tawakkul* is just one step in the forward journey, but in actual practice its importance is far greater.

It is only in theoretical discussion that the Šūfī path is divided into certain 'states' and 'stages', but in the actual practice these 'states' and 'stages' may not be distinguishable. "Should he venture to make a map of this interior ascent it will not correspond exactly with any of those made by previous explorers."¹⁵ The division and distinction of the 'stations' and 'states' are later rational formulations. In its actual practice the Šūfī path may be described in two categories, i.e. 'asceticism' and 'love'. The practice of asceticism is oriented towards the taming of the *nafs*. The *nafs* in the Islamic faith represents the lower self, base instincts and the material nature of man. It is the cause of all the blameworthy actions, sins, and base qualities, and the holy war in the Šūfī sense of the term is struggle against the perverse nature of the *nafs*.¹⁶ The *nafs* cannot be destroyed,¹⁷ but as a restive horse, it can be tamed and trained. Other ascetic practices which help to keep the *nafs* under control are repentance, abstinence, renunciation, poverty, patience etc.

At the other end of the journey is God—the 'Lord of the Worlds,' Beneficent,' 'Merciful,' 'Owner of the Day of Judgement.'¹⁸

13. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978, first 1975), p. 117.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

15. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, p. 28.

16. Schimmel, *op.cit.*, p. 112.

17. Nicholson, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

18. *The Meaning of the Glorious Qoran*, p. 31.

The only appropriate response to God can be of loving adoration. Rabi'a (d. 185/801) perhaps is the first woman mystic who introduced the element of love in the formative period of the Path. The ideal form of love can be found expressed in her sayings :

“O God : If I worship Thee in fear of Hell, burn me in Hell; and if I worship Thee in hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise; but if I worship Thee for Thine own sake, withhold not Thine everlasting beauty !”¹⁹

The goal of the Ṣūfī is to subdue God by the bonds of love,²⁰ and the discipline of the Ṣūfī is to tame the *nafs* by mortifications in order to put it into service to reach the goal. Now, *tawakkul* as the central doctrine of the Ṣūfī path refers both to the discipline and the goal. It incorporates both asceticism and divine love. Viewed in relation to *nafs*, *tawakkul* is asceticism, and viewed in relation to God *tawakkul* is love of God.

Trust as an attitude is a mixed response of the two basic opposing feelings of fear and love. We trust God because He is All Powerful and Overwhelming; also because He is Gracious and the Bestower of sustenance. It is surrender and faith at the same time—surrender because of His all-Compassing Lordliness, faith because of His graciousness and benevolence. As one grows stronger and stronger in *tawakkul*, the feeling of fear withers away and only the feeling of love remains.²¹ As we have seen in Rabi'a, this is an attitude of loving God for the sake of love alone. It is this type of mixed and ever-changing attitude that the Ṣūfis have described either in its inception, or in its perfection or in the intermediate stage. Here we would like to quote a few definitions of *tawakkul* by the prominent Ṣūfis. We have tried to classify these definitions into three

19. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, p. 115.

20. The Prophet reported God as saying : “My Earth and My Heaven contain me not but the heart of my faithful servant containeth me.” A.J. Arberry, *Ṣūfism : An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, p. 28.

21. Al-Sarrāj also, in his Chapter XXVI on the, ‘station’ of trust, has described three types of *tawakkul* : trust of the faithful (*al-mu 'minūn*), trust of the elect (*ahl-al-khuṣūs*) and the trust of the elect of the elect (*khuṣūs al-khuṣūs*). Al-Sarrāj, *The Kitāb al-Luma*, ‘edited with critical notes, and abstract of contents by R.A. Nicholson (London : Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1963).

groups so that they may be read as supporting the above view of beginning, middle and perfection.

Group One :

Sari al-Saqatī said : "Trust is stripping of power and strength."²²

Ibn Masrūq said : "Trust is resignation to the course of the decrees of fate."²³

Dhu'I-Nūn said : "*Tawakkul* is abandonment of the changeableness of the *nafs* and ridding of oneself of might and power."²⁴

Group Two :

Sahl said : "Trust is being at ease before God."²⁵

Abu Sa'id al-Kharrāz said : "The Lord granted sufficiency to the people of His Kingdom, and they dispensed with the stations of trusting in God in order that He might suffice : for how unseemly a thing it is for the people of purity to make stipulations."²⁶

'Ibn 'Atā' was asked of the reality of *tawakkul*, and he said : "That no distress occurs to you on account of material means in spite of your dire need for them, and that you continue in real reliance on God in spite of your having stopped short of it."²⁷

Group Three :

Abū 'Abdillāh al-Qurashī said : "Trust is abandoning every refuge except God."²⁸

Sahl said : "All the stations have a face and a back with the exception of trust : trust is a face without a back." He refers to the trust that is of care (for God), not the trust that is for sufficiency (from God).²⁹

22. Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhī, *The Doctrine of the Ṣūfis* (trans. by A.J. Arberry, Lahore : Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1966), p. 101.

23. *Ibid.*,

24. Al-Sarrāj (trans. by Carl W. Ernst), Chapter xxvi.

25. Al-Kalābādhī, p. 101.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

27. Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla al-Qushayrīya*, edited by 'Abd al-Halīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd ibn al-Sharīf, 2 vols., (Cairo : Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1974, trans. by Carl W. Ernst).

28. Al-Kalābādhī, p. 101.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

Shibli said : "It means that you are with respect to God as if you were not, and God is with respect to you as He is eternally."³⁰

Al-Junayd said that "it is for heart to find its support in God under all conditions."³¹

In Sūfism a mere attitude of trust does not mean anything unless it is practised in active life. Rather the basic meaning of trust consists in its practice. Junayd b. Muhammad has said : "*Tawhīd* (i.e. the pure monotheistic belief in God) is a 'saying of the heart' (*qawl al-qalb*), while *tawakkul* (i.e. the complete reliance on God) is a 'doing of the heart, (*amal al-qalb*)."³² The Sūfis were fully aware of the real nature and meaning of *tawakkul*. It is not surprising that in the classical Sūfi literature there are more stories about the actual practice of *tawakkul* than its theoretical definitions. Al-Sarrāj relates the story of Abū 'Abdilāh b. al-Jallā who refused to speak on the subject of trust in God (*tawakkul*) until he had given away four small coins which he possessed.³³ We have already seen in the stories of Ibrāhīm Khawwās and al-Daqqāq that the real meaning of *tawakkul* lies in its practice rather than its theory. In Sūfi literature most of the stories that tell of the practice of *tawakkul* primarily are those which are related to its extreme form such as the following :

"A dervish fell into the Tigris. Seeing that he could not swim, a man on the bank cried out, 'Shall I tell someone to bring you ashore?' 'No,' said the dervish. 'Then do you wish to be drowned?' 'No,' 'What, then, do you wish?' The dervish replied, 'God's will be done ! What have I to do with wishing ?'"³⁴

Other stories relating to the practice of *tawakkul* tell of similar incidents in the lives of Sūfis, such as having absolutely no trust in individual initiative or exertion, remaining indifferent in the face of danger, not storing food and clothes, travelling without provisions, not asking for anything even at the time of dire need, abstaining

30. Al-Sarrāj, Chapter xxvi.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology* (Yokohama : Yurindo Publishing Co. Ltd., 1965), p. 173.

33. Al-Sarrāj, Chapter lxxi.

34. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, p. 41.

from medicine during serious illness etc. *Tawakkul* understood in the light of the above discussion is complete resignation to the will of God and full of confidence in His grace and benevolence.

The function of *tawakkul* in the life of the seeker can easily be understood in terms of the station (*maqām*) following immediately after the station of *tawakkul*—in the systematized *Šūfī* path. This is the station of acquiescence (*ridā*). Schimmel perhaps has the same perspective in mind when she says, “*tawakkul* results in perfect inner peace.”³⁵ Mansūr b. ‘Ammār is reported to have said, “the hearts of those who trust (*mutawakkilīn*) are vessels of acquiescence (*ridā*)...”³⁶ Abū Ya‘qub al-Šūsi says of the people of *tawakkul* that they find rest from the troubles of this world and the next.³⁷ The reward of the *mutawakkilīn* in the next world is mentioned in the Qur‘ān (Sūra V:119).

The fire is not only in hell but it is in this world also. In this world it is in the form of passions represented in Islamic theology by *nafs*. Sometimes the *nafs* is personified as a dog (representing greed). The perfection of *tawakkul* redeems the seeker from the worldly fire of *nafs*, because at this stage the *nafs* is under check. The perfection of *tawakkul* thus results in a balanced personality. In adversity and in prosperity he remains in the state of equipoise. Dwelling on the question of what type of personality is shaped by *tawakkul*, Nicholson says, “at best, a harmless dervish who remains unmoved in the midst of sorrow, meets praise and blame with equal indifference and accepts insults, blows, torture and death as mere incidents in the eternal drama of destiny.”³⁸ *Tawakkul* thus relieves the seeker of many unnecessary worries and cares of the world and gives inner calm and equipoise. Such an ideal state is the goal of many faiths. The man of steady wisdom (*sthitaprajñā*) in the *Bhagavadgītā* is very close to the above ideal of *mutawakkilīn*.

But the practice of *tawakkul* in *Šūfism* has not always been a source of blessing. Sometimes its practice was carried to the extreme, at the cost of the other aspects of the *Šūfī* path, and led to suspicion

35. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 119.

36. Hujwiri, *The Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 126.

37. Margaret Smith, p. 172.

38. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, pp. 44-45.

about the practice of *tawakkul* even in Ṣūfī circles. We have already seen an example of this extreme form of practice of *tawakkul* in the story of the dervish in the Tigris. There are many other stories in Ṣūfī literature in which only the extreme form of *tawakkul* has come to be identified with the Ṣūfī Path. For example, the trust that God will provide *rizq* to everybody under all circumstances has led many Ṣūfis to abstain from undertaking any type of exertion. Schimmel says : "The faith in the *rizq* that will reach man was certainly carried too far by an early mystic who forbade his disciple to stretch out his hand to grasp a dried-up melon skin."³⁹ This type of practice is more a form of testing God, instead of putting trust in Him. But this type of misplaced emphasis in the practice of *tawakkul* seems to have its roots in the tradition itself. It derives its strength from the doctrine of predestination and practice of *Sunnah*. Such a notion of *tawakkul* may shape strange characters, such as the dervish in the Tigris or, as Nicholson says, "a useless drone and hypocrite preying upon his fellow-creatures."⁴⁰ The ethical implications of such a doctrine may not be very healthy. These are some of the possible risks of the doctrine of *tawakkul*. But the extreme form of *tawakkul* was never the essential doctrine of the Ṣūfī path. The earlier Ṣūfī Shaykhs were fully aware of the possible misinterpretation of the doctrine, therefore they always preached a healthy balance between the doctrine of predestination and the commands of the Qur'ān and the rules of the *Sunnah*. Al-Junayd said : "The proper method of earning is to engage in works which bring one nearer to God, and to occupy oneself with them in the same spirit as with—the works of supererogation commended to one, not with the idea that they were the means of sustenance or advantage."⁴¹ Sahl said : "It is not proper for those who put all their trust in God to acquire, except for the purpose of following the *Sunnah*; and for others it is not proper, except for the purpose of mutual assistance."⁴² Al-Khawwās said : "Do not trouble yourself with anything that is done for you, and do not neglect anything that you are bound to do for yourself,"

39. Schimmel, *Mystical Simension of Islam*, p. 118.

40. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, p. 44.

41. Al-Kalābādhi, p. 81.

42. *Ibid.*

i.e. 'do not trouble yourself with destiny, for what is destined from eternity will not be changed by your efforts, and do not neglect His commandments, for you will be punished if you neglect them.'⁴³ Rūmī has related a very long and interesting story about the same controversy of destiny and exertion in relation of trust.⁴⁴ A very fine balance between destiny and exertion has been maintained since early times. Some examples of the extreme form of trust are the result of just a misplaced emphasis; they do not form the core of the doctrine.

In conclusion we can say that the importance of *tawakkul* in the Šūfī path is far greater than just a small 'station' among others. Rather, it is a central doctrine in the Šūfī path. It is one of the basic principles of Islam and Šūfism, and its real nature and meaning can only be understood in the total perspective of Islamic theology and practice. Historically, *tawakkul* has come to be misunderstood as blind faith in destiny; but its proper understanding and practice may lead to be balanced moral life and perfect inner peace. In this sense, its practice leads to the realization of the highest goal in the Šūfī path.

43. Hujwiri, *The Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 146.

44. Jalāluddīn Rūmī, *The Mathnawī*, Book I, trans. by Reynold A. Nicholson (London : Luzac & Co. Ltd., 1977, first 1926), pp. 50-56, verses 900-990.

Attitudes of Al-Junayd and Al-Ḥallāj Towards the *Sunna* and *Aḥwāl* and *Maqāmāt*

Ṣūfism, or more specifically *taṣawwuf*,¹ is a mystical movement within Islam in which the Muslim seeker endeavours to attain direct experience of God or reunion with Him.² The name *Ṣūfī* is probably derived from the habit of these saints of wearing the woollen garment (*labṣ al-ṣūf*) symbolic of their renunciation of the worldly comforts and ascetic life dedicated to the love and devotion of God.³ The origin of this movement is traced back to Prophet Muhammad himself. His attitude to God and many of his experiences are mystical in nature, and some of the verses of the Qur'ān (e.g. Sūra II:182; L:51, etc.) also have a mystical character.⁴ "A strong tradition," says Arberry, "connects the growth of this movement with the Prophet through his cousin and son-in-law 'Alī Ibn Abū Tālib... According to this version, the Prophet invested 'Alī with a cloak or *Kherqa* on initiating him into the esoteric mysteries imparting to him therewith the heavenly wisdom which transcends all formal

1. "...the act of devoting oneself to the mystical life." L. Massignon, "Taṣawwuf," *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by H.A.R. Gibb and J.H. Kramers (New York : Cornell University Press, 1953), p. 579b.
2. "Islamic mysticism refers to that aspect of Islamic belief and practice in which Muslims seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God." Annemarie Schimmel, "Islamic Mysticism" in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago : Helen Hemingway Benteon, 1977), Vol. 9, p. 943b. "Ṣūfism is the name given to the mystical movement within Islam; a Ṣūfī is a Muslim who dedicates himself to the quest after mystical union (or, better said reunion) with his Creator." A.J. Arberry, *Muslim Saints and Mystics* (translation of Farid al-Dīn Attār's *Tadhkirat al-Auliya*) (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, (1976), p.1.
3. Arberry, *Loc. cit.*
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

learning. In his turn, 'Alī invested his own initiates, and through them the *selselas* or chains of affiliation passed on the inner lore of mystical truth to succeeding generations."⁵ In the earlier centuries of Islamic history these ascetic lovers of God were not much distinguishable from the rest of the community. It was only towards the end of the eighth century that they started forming themselves into small groups for their personal benefit and encouragement.⁶ Later on, this movement spread to all parts of the Islamic world.

Al-Junayd and al-Hallāj are two towering figures in the whole history of Islamic mysticism. They flourished in the latter part of the ninth and early part of the tenth centuries. Both are associated with Baghdad and are representative of the two main strands of Islamic mysticism, one sober (moderate) and the other ecstatic (intoxicated).

Abu'I-Qāsim al-Junayd ibn Muhammad ibn al-Junayd al-Khazzāz al-Qawāriri was born and brought up in Baghdad but his ancestors came from the Persian town of Nihawand in the province of Jibal.⁷ His father was a *qawāriri* (glass merchant); al-Junayd himself was a *khazzāz* (merchant of raw silk), and his maternal uncle a *saqati* (merchant dealing in spices). His date of birth is not known but he died at Baghdad in 298/910.⁸ His father passed away when al-Junayd was still a child. He was brought up by his maternal uncle Sari al-Saqati.⁹ Al-Junayd's first acquaintance with the mystic way

5. Arberry, *Loc. cit.*, p. 3. Arberry also refers to another Persian convert, Salmān, and the "prominent figure in early Sūfism." Salmān, according to the legend, "took part in the great siege of Medina." "If any credence is to be attached to this legend, then Salmān would be the first Persian Muslim to become a Sūfi."

6. *Ibid.*

7. Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd* (London: Luzac and Company, Ltd., 1962), p. 2; see also A.J. Arberry, "al-Djunayd" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by B. Lewis, Ch. Pellat and J. Schacht (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), Vol. ii, p. 600a; al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, translated by R.A. Nicholson (London: Luzac and Co., Ltd., 1959), does not refer to his Nihawandi background; he refers to him as al-Baghdadi, p. 128.

8. Abdel-Kader, *op.cit.*, p. 2; *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, p. 199.

9. Abdel-Kader, *Loc. cit.*, Sari al-Saqati was a celebrated Sūfi of his time. With al-Muḥāsibi, Sari al-Saqati is regarded as the founder of the Baghdadi school of mysticism. Both al-Muḥāsibi and al-Saqati were Sunnis, i.e. they followed the orthodox tradition of Islam. Al-Saqati is famous for his doctrine of unification (*tawḥīd*) and also for his symbolic expressions (*ishārāt*). *Ibid.*, Vol. ii, p. 35.

was in his uncle Sari al-Saqati's house.¹⁰ Al-Junayd studied law and *ḥadīth* under Abū Thawr, a renowned scholar of his times who died in 240/854.¹¹ After completing his studies of law and *ḥadīth*, he turned to Ṣūfism and became the disciple of al-Ḥarīth al-Muḥāsibī.¹² We learn from 'Attār that he practised the spiritual discipline rigorously for forty years. "Everyday he would go to the shop and draw down the blind and perform four hundred *rak'as*. After a time he abandoned the shop and withdrew to a room in the porch of Sari's house, where he busied himself with the guardianship of his heart... For forty years Jonaid persevered in his mystic course. For thirty years he would perform the prayer before sleeping, then stand on his feet repeating 'Allāh' until dawn, saying the dawn prayer with the ablution he had made the previous night."¹³ Thus, he attained perfection in both the traditional Islamic learning and Ṣūfī spiritual discipline before he started preaching. He himself says about his success: "That has been the reason of my success, because our knowledge must be controlled by going back to the Qur'ān and the Sunna. Whoever has not learned the Qur'ān by heart, and has not formally studied *ḥadīth*, and has not learned law before embarking on Ṣūfism, is a man who has no right to lead."¹⁴

After this, his fame spread and he came to be recognized as an undisputed authority on traditional learning as well as on Ṣūfism. Hujwiri says, "He was approved by externalists and spiritualists alike. He was perfect in every branch of science, and spoke with authority on theology, jurisprudence and ethics."¹⁵ "With Muḥāsibī," says Arberry, "he is to be accounted the greatest orthodox exponent of

10. Abdel-Kader, *Loc. cit.*, p. 8.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 2; *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 128.

12. Abdel-Kader, *The Life Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, p. 2; "Al-Junayd relates that one day as he was leaving his uncle, Sari as-Saqati asked him to whose *majlis* (assembly) he was going. He replied: to that of Harith al-Muḥāsibī. Sari then said: Yes, go and accept his learning and his discipline, but beware of his speculative reasoning and his refutation of the Mu'tazilites. And, as I was going out, adds al-Junayd, I heard Sari says, May God make you a traditionalist who is a Ṣūfī, not a Ṣūfī who is a traditionalist." *Ibid.*, p. 3, Cf. Abū Tālib al-Makki, *Qūt al-Qūlub*, Vol. 2, p. 35.

13. *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, p. 201.

14. Abdel-Kader, *op.cit.*, p. 3. Cf. Subki, *Tabaqat*, Vol. 2, p. 36.

15. *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 128.

the 'Sober' type of Šūfism, and the titles which later writers bestowed on him—*sayyid ad-tā'ifa* (Lord of the Sect), *ta ūs al-fikarā'* (Peacock of the Dervishes), *shaykh al-mashā'ikh* (Director of the Directors)—indicates in what esteem he was held.¹⁶

It seems al-Junayd was not a prolific writer. He has not written many books. All that has been preserved and reaches us is his *Rasā'il*, which are his letters written to other contemporary Šūfis. Some of the earlier Šūfi manuals have also preserved his sayings in the form of quotations. He perhaps was not in favour of preserving his writings.¹⁷

Thus we see that al-Junayd was a rare figure in the ninth century Islam who was able to synthesize the Islamic orthodoxy with Šūfism. His personality and his doctrines are a perfect model of this synthesis. In his doctrines he was able to synthesize orthodoxy and Šūfism with the help of the doctrine of Divine Unity (*Tawhīd*) and the doctrine of Sobriety (*Ṣaḥw*). We shall briefly refer to these doctrines when comparing his Šūfi attitude to that of al-Hallāj.

"Junayd," concludes Abdel Kader, "was a non-radical and was considered a traditionalist in his attitude to orthodox theology. He held that Šūfi teachings were based on the fundamentals of the tradition of Islam, and worked continuously to prove this. In this spirit he raised, as we have seen, Šūfism to the level of orthodoxy and thus made it acceptable to the orthodox representatives of Islam."¹⁸

Abu'l-Mughith al-Ḥusayn ibn Maṣṣūr al-Hallāj was born about 244/857-8 in Tur to the northeast of Bayda in Fars.¹⁹ His father, who was probably a wool-carder, left Tur for the textile region which extended from Tustar to Wasit (on the Tigris).²⁰ Al-Ḥusayn learnt the Qur'ān by heart when he was twelve years old and became a *ḥāfiz*.²¹ From very early age he was interested in the inner meaning

16. A.J. Arberry, "al-Djunayd." *op.cit.*, p. 600a.

17. "...when Junayd was dying, he requested that all his books should be buried with him." Abdel-Kader, *The Life Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, p. 54 Cf. *Tā'rikh-i Baghdād*, Vol. 7. p. 248.

18. Abdel-Kader, *op.cit.*, p. 51.

19. L. Massignon (L. Gardet) "al-Hallāj" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. iii, p. 99b; *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 151; A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978), p. 66.

20. Massignon, *op.cit.*, p. 100a.

21. *Ibid.*

of the Qur'ānic verses and applied himself to *taṣawwuf* at the school of Sahl al-Tustari.²² After some time he left Sahl²³ and came to Basra and became a disciple of 'Amar ibn 'Uthmān al-Makki. Here he married the daughter of another Ṣūfī, Abū Ya'qub al-Aqta', and from her he had three sons and one daughter.²⁴ His marriage with Aqta's daughter displeased 'Amar al-Makki, who had differences with al-Aqta'.²⁵ From Basra he came to Baghdad to associate himself with al-Junayd, but he did not stay there for long and set out for pilgrimage to Mecca.²⁶ "At Mecca," writes Massignon, "he made his first pilgrimage, and made a vow to remain for one year of 'umra in a courtyard of the sanctuary, in a state of perpetual fasting and silence. In this way he was trying out his personal way to union with God, and going against the discipline of secrecy, began to proclaim it,"²⁷ Then onwards begins his apostolic career. The main aim of his preachings was to enable everyone to find God within his own heart. He visited many countries, including Khuzestan, Khurasan, Transoxiana, Sistan, India and Turkestan.²⁸ During these years he twice made pilgrimage to Mecca and finally came to Baghdad, where he had established a house for his family. During his missions he attracted many followers but also exposed himself to suspicion and hatred. Ṣūfis were against him for breaking the Ṣūfī discipline of secrecy and proclaiming his union with God.²⁹ The traditionalists were against him because he was not attaching much weight to the prevailing doctrine.³⁰ His attempt to interiorize the external rites (as

22. *Ibid.*, Hujwiri also says that at first he was the disciple of Sahl b. 'Abdullāh, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 151. 'Attār also agrees that first he served Sahl ibn 'Abdullāh for two years, *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, p. 265.

23. Hujwiri says that he left him without seeking permission, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 151.

24. Massignon, "al-Hallāj" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 100a; 'Attār, *op.cit.*, p. 265.

25. *Ibid.*, Hujwiri writes that he left, Amr Makki also without asking permission, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 151.

26. Hujwiri says that he was not received by Junayd, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 151; but 'Attār says that Junayd prescribed for him silence and solitude and he stayed there for some time, *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, p. 265.

27. Massignon, *op.cit.*, p. 100a; 'Attār, also says that he stayed in Mecca for one year, *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, p. 265.

28. *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, p. 264.

29. Massignon, *op.cit.*, p. 102a.

30. *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, p. 265.

he is reported to have said, "The important thing is to proceed seven times around the Ka'ba of one's heart")³¹ came to be interpreted literally and he was accused of being a Qarmati rebel who wished to destroy the Ka'ba of Mecca.³² Finally his proclamation of ana'l-Ḥaqq (I am [God] the Truth) was interpreted as the doctrine of incarnation (*ḥulūl*). For all these and many more social and political reasons, he was condemned and came to be considered as a great danger to the law and society. People accused him of heresy, put him into prison and finally killed him on the gibbet (*ṣalīb*) on March 26, 922.³³ All authors on al-Hallāj give a moving account of his martyrdom and the bravery and cheerfulness with which he underwent these sufferings. His last words were: "It is enough for the lover (who has found ecstasy)" that he should make the One single," i.e. that his existence should be cleared away from the path of love.³⁴

Al-Hallāj is a unique figure in Islamic mysticism. Islamic thought in history is divided in its understanding of this intoxicated votary of God. This dilemma of Islamic history is very clearly reflected in the earliest available account of Ṣūfism.³⁵ Hujwiri's attempt is aimed to solve this problem. He gives a list of different opinions of the great Ṣūfis about al-Hallāj and divides them into three groups—those who reject him, those who accept him, and those who suspend their judgement about him. He lists Junayd in the third category. Giving the general opinion of his times about Hallāj, Hujwiri writes, "...of all these Shaykhs only a few deny the perfection of his merit and the purity of his spiritual state and the abundance of his ascetic practices."³⁶ Of his personal spiritual life Hujwiri says, "Ḥusayn, as long as he lived, wore the garb of piety, consisting in prayer and praise of God and continual fasts and fine

31. Massignon, "al-Hallāj" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 101a.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*, p. 101b.

34. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 69.

35. *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 151.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 150-153. Massignon has given a very comprehensive list of the divided opinion of the scholars and saints about al-Hallāj, and like Hujwiri he also divides all the opinions into three main categories, Massignon, *op.cit.*, pp. 103b-104a.

37. *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 150.

sayings on the subject of unification."³⁸ Hujwīrī, being a follower of the sober school of Ṣūfism, concludes about al-Ḥallāj, "Therefore, although he is dear to my heart, yet his 'path' is not soundly established on any principle, and his state is not fixed in any position and his experiences are largely mingled with error."³⁹ About the same confusion, Attār says, "In their bewilderment the people were divided concerning him. His detractors were countless, his supporters innumerable. They witnessed many wonders performed by him. Tongues wagged, and his words were carried to the Caliph. Finally, all were united in the view that he should be put to death because of his saying, 'I am the Truth.'⁴⁰ It is interesting to note that Hodgson in his inability to side with any opinion has tried to ascribe this dilemma of Islamic history to al-Ḥallāj himself: "It is said that in his agony he expressed his delight that he was suffering so for God's sake, but acknowledged that his judges were as right to condemn him, so as to safeguard the community life, so as to proclaim the love of God."⁴¹ Schimmel identifies the same dilemma not only in history but also in the impact of history. She says about Ḥallāj, "...and whose name became, in the course to time, a symbol for both suffering love and unitive experience, but also for a lover's greatest sin: to divulge the secret of his love."⁴²

We may conclude the above brief discussion concerning al-Ḥallāj in agreement with Massignon, who says, "...there is scarcely a work devoted to the culture of the Islamic countries which omits mention of al-Ḥallāj; while there is continual confirmation of the value and authenticity of his mystic approach and of the witness of his life and of his death. In addition to the works of the specialists, it can be said that the fame of al-Ḥallāj has become part of universal culture."⁴³

We have noted earlier that al-Junayd and al-Ḥallāj represented the two distinct strands in *taṣawwuf*, one moderate (sober) and the

38. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, p. 266.

41. M.G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974). Vol. i, p. 409.

42. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 64.

43. Massignon, "al-Ḥallāj" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 104a.

other ecstatic (intoxicated). This fact may be clearly ascertained from the above brief accounts of their lives. Now we may turn to discuss in brief their attitude towards the tradition (*Sunna*) and towards the stations (*maqāmāt*) and states (*aḥwāl*) of the Ṣūfī path (*tarīqa*), which also seems to elaborate the above view.

The Prophet is reported to have said, "The *Shari'a* are my words (*aqwālī*), the *tarīqa* are my actions (*ʿamālī*), and *ḥaqīqa* is my interior states (*aḥwālī*)."⁴⁴ In the Islamic tradition, *Shari'*s represent the *Sunna*—the traditional Islamic law which governs the moral and spiritual conduct—the *tarīqa* is the spiritual path; and the *ḥaqīqa* is the Truth. These three aspects are mutually interdependent, and the *tarīqa* is soundly grounded in the *Shari'a*. In the earlier Ṣūfī treatises, the *tarīqa* is further divided into many stations (*maqāmāt*) and states (*aḥwāl*). The *maqāmāt* denote the progressive stations that the seeker attains on the spiritual path. These stations are attained by the seekers by virtue of their earnest efforts and devotion.⁴⁵ The states on the other hand denote the favour and grace of God that the seeker receives on the path. They descend from God in the heart of man. They cannot be attained by the seeker's own efforts.⁴⁶ Another important point concerning the stations and states is that the attainment of the stages is progressive,⁴⁷ while the states are received instantaneously.⁴⁸ The interrelationship of the stations and states is also interesting. Gardet says, "The *maqāmāt* and the *aḥwāl* are clearly presented as two series of the spiritual states, the first acquired, the second received; hence, in the manuals and the descriptions of the soul's ascent the *maqāmāt* generally precede the *aḥwāl*. But in fact the difference is one of perspective and stage of analysis. Both are readily called route, the resting places... The same *manzil*, the same resting place, according to authors and their analytical processes, may be classed among either the *maqāmāt* or

44. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 99.

45. *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 181.

46. *Ibid.*

47. "Thus the first station is repentance (*tawbat*), then comes conversion (*inābat*), then renunciation (*zuhd*), then trust in God (*tawakkul*), and so on; it is not permissible that anyone should pretend to conversion without repentance, or to renunciation without conversion, or to trust in God without renunciation," *ibid.*, p. 181.

48. L. Gardet., "Hal," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. iii, p. 83b.

the *aḥwāl*, for example *maḥabba* (love of the soul and of God). For al-Kalābādhi, this is the loftiest of the *makāmāt* reached, and for al-Ansāri, the first of the *aḥwāl*.⁴⁹ These distinctions of the stations and states, therefore, are theoretical and in the practical life of the Ṣūfi they may not be found in such a clear-cut way. Their meaning and realization may also differ from one mystic to another. This perhaps is the reason that in the earliest Ṣūfi manuals the sequence and number of the *maqāmāt* and *aḥwāl* are not the same. And, if Ṣūfism is the way of direct personal communication with God, it should not be the same. To expect the conduct of an incomparable figure such as al-Hallāj to conform to any set of *maqāmāt* and *aḥwāl* would be unwise. Still, we can observe the attitude of a Ṣūfi towards the tradition (as far as the *maqāmāt* and *aḥwāl* are religious categories they are also part of the tradition).

So far as al-Junayd is concerned, his attitude towards the Islamic tradition and orthodoxy is very clear. He does not disregard the tradition; rather he attempts to interpret his own personal experience in terms of traditional religious categories. He is not only a follower but also the chief exponent of the sober school of Baghdad which may be called the traditionalistic Ṣūfi school. His teachings are based on the Qur'ān the *Ḥadīth* and the *Sunna*.⁵⁰ He strongly holds this view that even after the attainment of the state of *fanā* (annihilation of the self) it is possible and necessary to maintain sobriety (*ṣaḥw*). "But when the Ṣūfi comes to this state of sobriety and thus returns to the community, he still does not quite get away from the state of *fanā* which he has experienced. But he keeps this experience like a secret treasure concealed within himself inside his new state."⁵¹ His doctrine thus is based on sobriety in opposition to the doctrine of rapture (*ghalabā*) and intoxication (*sukr*) held by Abū Yazīd Tayfūr al-Bistāmī.⁵² Al-Junayd's attitude towards religious works remained positive. "A man said to al-Junayd: 'Amongst the men of God (Ṣūfis), there are those who hold that the keeping away from activities belongs to piety and fear of God.' Al-Junayd

49. Ibid., pp. 83b-84a; *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, p. 182.

50. Abdel-Kader, *The Life Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, p. 40.

51. Ibid., p. 90.

52. *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, p. 184.

answered : "That is the doctrine of people who treat religious works as of no worth, which I hold to be a grievous sin."⁵³ Further, he says about himself, "And, if I were to live a thousand years, I should not like to be found lacking in the works of piety even as much as a single grain of dust."⁵⁴

Al-Hallāj's relation and attitude towards the tradition is very complex. He is not a theorist like al-Junayd. Only one thing that is clear about him is that, "He was an enamoured and intoxicated votary of Šūfism. He has a strong ecstasy and a 'lofty spirit.'"⁵⁵ The other thing which is again clear about him is that, "The Šūfī Shaykhs are at variance concerning him."⁵⁶ Whatever he holds, it seems, has been misunderstood.⁵⁷ Because of his ecstatic conduct not only orthodox theologians but some Šūfīs also became displeased with him. When in his rapture he broke off his relation with 'Amar al-Makki and came to al-Junayd to associate with him, the latter did not receive him.⁵⁸ Attār says that he was expelled from fifty cities.⁵⁹ Regarding al-Hallāj's attitude towards tradition, Attār says that he attached no weight to the prevailing doctrine.⁶⁰ Hujwiri says that "his 'path' is not soundly established on any principle, and his state is not fixed in any position."⁶¹ "Al-Hallāj has said," writes Massignon, "the important thing is to proceed seven times around the Ka'ba of one's heart."⁶² 'Amar al Makki is reported to have said, "I was reading a verse from the Qur'ān and Hallāj said : "I too can speak like that."⁶³ About his personal religious life, as we have noted earlier, Hujwiri expresses a high opinion. "Husayn," he says, "as long as he lived, wore the garb of piety consisting in prayer and praise of God and continual fasts and fine saying on the subject of

53. Abdel-Kader, *The Life Personality and writings of al-Junayd*, pp. 88-89.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

55. *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 150.

56. *Ibid.*

57. *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, pp. 266-67.

58. *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 189.

59. *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, pp. 266.

60. *Ibid.*

61. *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 152.

62. Massignon, "al-Hallāj" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 101a.

63. Abdel-Kader, *op.cit.*, p. 40. Cf. *Tā'rikh-i-Baghdād*, Vol. 8, p. 121.

unification.”⁶⁴ Again he says, “...but of all the Shaykhs only a few deny the perfection of his merit and the purity of his spiritual state and the abundance of his ascetic practices.”⁶⁵

In the light of the above views of some scholars regarding al-Hallāj, we may say that he was maintaining the traditional laws but at the ecstatic level, which the people could not understand; he was condemned as a heretic. This is the difference of his attitude from al-Junayd's and his so called indifference towards the tradition. In his enraptured state he could not emphasize the importance of external rites and practices, but put his main emphasis on the interior love and devotion to God.

64. *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 152.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

Can 'Hierarchy' Define the Caste System : An Analysis of the Views of Louis Dumont

Is Indian caste society like the modern Western society ? If not, how does it differ from the latter ? Can a Western scholar apply the same method which he applies to the understanding of his own society to the understanding of the caste society ? If not, what type of changes are required ? What is wrong with the earlier studies of the caste society ? Does the caste system have anything to teach the modern Western society ? These are some of the questions which have been taken up in the present work;¹ and an attempt has been made to find satisfactory solutions to these questions. The notion of hierarchy is inseparably related to all these questions and also to the answers. In the following pages we briefly propose to survey the importance, meaning and function of hierarchy in the caste society as it has been developed in the present work.

Modern Western society is based on the principle of equality. Unlike this egalitarian society, caste society is based on the principle of hierarchy.² The basic task of the author in this work is to bring this central principle of hierarchy to light.³ This recognition illuminates the real difference between Western society and the Indian caste society, between the methods of approach and between the earlier studies and the present study. It is because of the inability

1. Dumont, Louis, *Homo Hierarchicus : An Essay on the Caste System* (Translated into English by Mark Sainsbury) (Chicago : The Chicago University Press, 1970).
2. "To anticipate in a few words : the caste teaches us a fundamental social principle, hierarchy." *Ibid.*, p. 2.
3. "...the present work, which will stop in substance at the discovery of hierarchy..." *Ibid.*, p. 2.

to recognize this basic principle that the caste system has not been understood properly.⁴ While giving a brief survey of the earlier studies of the caste system, the author has pointed out some of the reasons for their inadequacy, which are, "the reduction of the religious to the non-religious, the tendency to take part for the whole, either the caste instead of the system, or an aspect (separation) or hierarchy instead of all the aspects together; finally and especially at this time the underestimation or the reduction of *hierarchy*, the failure to consider it or the incapacity to understand it...this is the stumbling block, the main obstacle to the understanding of caste system."⁵ The present study promises to undo the earlier mistakes. It is the study of caste system, as a system.⁶ Dumont studies the caste system from the structural approach.⁷ In such a study, a particular caste is not an isolated phenomenon; it is inseparably related to the whole system according to the principle of hierarchy.⁸

Before turning to the definition of hierarchy, it may be noted that the idea of hierarchy is not new to the field of the study of the caste system. It was used by the French Sociologist Celestin Bouglé in his French work *Essais sur le regime des castes* as early as in 1908, while defining the caste system.⁹ In the present study, the author

4. "Returning to the more limited object of this book, we shall see that our modern denial of hierarchy is what chiefly hinders us in understanding the caste system." *Ibid.*, p. 20.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
6. "After a long period dominated by a tendency which led to atomization, the essential problem for contemporary thought is to rediscover the meaning of wholes or systems and structure provides the only logical form as yet available to this end." *Ibid.*, p. 41.
7. "We shall speak of structure exclusively in this case, when the interdependence of the elements of a system is so great that they disappear without residue if an inventory is made of the relations between them : a system of relations, in short not a system of elements." *Ibid.*, p. 40.
8. "The case isolates itself by submission to the whole... it is to a large extent hierarchy which dictates separation." *Ibid.*, p. 41.
9. "...the caste system divides the whole society into a large number of hereditary groups, distinguished from one another and connected together by three characteristics : *separation* in matters of marriage and conduct, whether direct or indirect (food); *division* of labour, each group having, in theory or by tradition, a profession from which their members can depart only within certain limits, and finally *hierarchy*, which ranks the groups as relatively superior or inferior to one another." *Ibid.*, p. 21.

takes the idea of hierarchy from the definition of Bougle, and develops it into a pure human frame, or an ideological form of reference.¹⁰ We can say it in other words, that it was the application of these abstract ideas into concrete situations which led him to develop the principle of hierarchy as the basic principle.¹¹

The author defines hierarchy as, "the principle by which the elements of a whole are ranked in relation to the whole...;"¹² and the hierarchical relation as, "the relation between the larger and smaller, or more precisely between *that which encompasses and that which is encompassed*."¹³ Seen in the light of the above definition, hierarchy is a conscious form of reference of relation of parts to the whole in a system.¹⁴ The recognition of the principle of hierarchy as central to the caste system and bringing it to the forefront, constitute present author's departing point from the earlier Western studies.¹⁵

Before we proceed further to note the function of hierarchy in the ideology of caste system, we must also understand the relation of hierarchy to the basic structural principle of the caste system. It has been noticed earlier that in the structural principle of the caste system. It has been noticed earlier that in the structural universe the whole governs the parts and the whole is very strictly based on the basic opposition. The basic opposition in the present case is the opposition between the pure and the impure. According to

10. "At the beginning of the century Bougle analysed the system on the basis of the literature about it and, by contrast with the partial theories which he discussed, insisted on the presence of three characteristics (hierarchy, separation, interdependence). He too was tempted to associate each with a different cause, but in the end he based them altogether on the opposition between the pure and the impure, and this will be our starting point." *Ibid.*, p. 30.

11. "...the basic claim of the present work is precisely to demonstrate the relationship between abstract and concrete aspects, between a certain methodology on the one hand and the unravelling of unsuspected consistencies or the subsuming of great complexities under simple formulae on the other." *Ibid.*, p. XIII.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

13. Euler Ramond Apthorpe, *Cf. Ibid.*, p. XII.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

15. "...in place of the isolation and the separation of the caste from one another, which have been found so prominent, we shall bring hierarchy to the forefront..." *Ibid.*, p. XIII.

Dumont," this opposition underlies hierarchy, which is the superiority of the pure to the impure... The whole is founded on the necessary and hierarchical co-existence of the two opposites."¹⁶ It may be emphasized here that the hierarchy should not be understood as the substance of the whole. This distinction is very important in the structural method. It is the conscious frame of reference according to which relations of the parts to the whole are governed and regulated. We may also add here that the principle of hierarchy is the logical outcome of the structure, based on the opposition between pure and impure. The notions of *pavitra-apavitra* (sacred-profane); *maṅgala-amaṅgala* (auspicious-inauspicious); *saucha-asaucha* (pure-impure); *śukla-aśukla* (bright-dark); *suddha-aśuddha* (unadulterated-adulterated) are so prominent and pervasive in the Hindu society that they may be called the basic opposition of the structure of the society. These are the above-noted basic characteristics of the society which reflect in the principle of hierarchy and give it its indigenous character. The Westerners who are not familiar with these characteristics of the caste system, fail to recognise the principle of hierarchy in its proper sense. Either they consider it as an insignificant aspect of the system or an epiphenomenon. Dumont has emphasized the point that hierarchy is the basic *form* in the human consciousness. It is in the caste system that we find this form fully developed. If this form is denied recognition or repressed (as in the egalitarian-system), it finds expression in some other aberrant forms such as racism, discrimination, etc.¹⁷ This is the lesson that the caste system can teach the egalitarian system.

We may note now some of the theoretical and practical implications of hierarchy as the central principle in the caste system. The division of the society into four hereditary groups does not make any sense if the hierarchical order of the society is not recognized. The four *varṇas* are inseparably related and interdependent groups. If we isolate a *varṇa* out of the system, it ceases to have its meaning. The purity and the higher status of the *brahman* can only have meaning in relation to the impurity and lower status of the

16. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 243.

śudra. It is this basic opposition and interdependence which has sustained the caste system. The principle of hierarchy orders and regulates the relations not only of the four *varnas* but also of thousands of *jātis* and segmentations of *varnas* and make their harmonious co-existence possible. If we look carefully, we can easily note that from the lowest to the highest level all the actions and the behaviours are governed and regulated by the rules emanating from the principle of hierarchy. It regulates the rules of food and touching, of the division of labour, of kinship relations and marriage and finally of governing the state.

In the caste system the hierarchy reaches its climax in the *brahman*. Even power and authority, which are so basic in the Western society do not disturb this hierarchical order. The *brahman* maintains his superiority over the *kṣatriya* by virtue of his higher status of purity i.e. his control over the other-worldly affairs in relation to which this-worldly affairs are regarded as false (*mithya*). The king holds power only in the unreal world, whereas the *brahman* holds power in the real world, therefore, his status is lower than the *brahman's*. Example of such hierarchical relations based on the notions of purity and impurity can be infinitely multiplied. We would like to quote here Dumont, who has summed up the function of the principle of hierarchy in a very few and fine words :

"One may see in the hierarchical principle, as it appears in India in its pure state, a fundamental feature of complex societies other than our own, and a principle of their unity; not their material, but their conceptual or symbolic unity. That is the essential 'function' of hierarchy; it expresses the unity of such a society whilst connecting it to what appears to be universal, namely a conception of the cosmic order, whether or not it includes a God, or a king as mediator. If one likes, hierarchy integrates the society by reference to its values."¹⁸

Concluding this brief essay, one may say that the principle of hierarchy is the key principle to the understanding of caste system. Though the term is not indigenous, the idea seems to be indigenous. There may be some exception to the principle as the author himself

18. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

has referred to some of them, but judging from its functional value, one may easily agree with the learned, and objective scholar, that the principle of hierarchy is the basic idea for the understanding of the caste system which remained ignored, or unrecognized during all these years. One also may agree with him that the traditional caste society of India was based on the principle of hierarchy.

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